

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY



139 509

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY















Percy Society

EARLY ENGLISH POETRY,  
BALLADS,  
AND POPULAR LITERATURE  
OF THE MIDDLE AGES.

EDITED FROM ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS  
AND SCARCE PUBLICATIONS.

VOL. XXV.

LONDON.

PRINTED FOR THE PERCY SOCIETY,  
BY RICHARDS, ST MARTINS LANE

---

M.DCCC.XLVIII.



CONTENTS OF VOL. XXV.

---

THE CANTERBURY TALES OF CHAUCER.  
VOL. II.

EDITED BY T. WRIGHT, ESQ.



# THE CANTERBURY TALES

OF GEOFFREY CHAUCER

A NEW TEXT

WITH ILLUSTRATIVE

NOTES

EDITED BY

THOMAS WRIGHT, ESQ. M.A. F.S.A. ETC.

*Corresponding Member of the Institute of France (Académie  
des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres).*

VOLUME THE SECOND.

LONDON :

PRINTED FOR THE PERCY SOCIETY,

BY RICHARDS, 110, ST. MARTIN'S LANE.

MDCCCXLVII





COUNCIL  
OF  
**The Perry Society.**

---

*President,*

THE RIGHT HON. LORD BRAYBROOKE, F.S.A.

W. HARRISON AINSWORTH, Esq.

THOMAS AMYOT, Esq. F.R.S., F.S.A.

ROBERT BELL, Esq.

WILLIAM HENRY BLACK, Esq.

BOLTON CORNEY, Esq., M.R.S.J.

T. CROFTON CROKER, Esq. F.S.A., M.R.I.A.

J. H. DIXON, Esq.

FREDERICK WILLIAM FAIRHOLT, Esq. F.S.A.

JAMES ORCHARD HALLIWELL, Esq. F.R.S., F.S.A.

J. S. MOORE, Esq.

EDMUND PEEL, Esq.

T. J. PETTIGREW, Esq. F.R.S., F.S.A.

JAMES PRIOR, Esq. F.S.A., M.R.I.A.

WILLIAM SANDYS, Esq. F.S.A.

THOMAS WRIGHT, Esq. M.A., F.S.A., *Treasurer & Secretary.*



## THE CANTERBURY TALES.

---

### THE PROLOGE OF THE FRERE.

THIS worthy lymytour, this noble Frere,  
He made alway a maner lourynge cheere  
Upon the Sompnour, but for honesté  
No vileyns worde yit to him spak he. 6850  
But atte last he sayd unto the wyf,  
“ Dame,” quod he, “ God give yow good lyf!  
Ye han her touchid, al so mot I the,  
In scole matier gret difficulté.  
Ye han sayd mochel thing right wel, I say :  
But, dame, right as we ryden by the way,  
Us needeth nought but for to speke of gamo,  
And lete auctorités, in Goddos name,  
To preching and to scoles of clergie.  
But if it like to this companye, 6860  
I wil yow of a sompnour telle a game :  
Pardé, ye may wel knowe by the name,  
That of a sompnour may no good be sayd ;  
I pray that noon of yow be evel apayd ;  
A sompnour is a renner up and doun

---

6868.—*Auctorités*. “*Auctoritas* was the usual word for what we call a text of Scripture. MS. Harl. 106, 10. *Expositio auctoritatis*, *Majus gaudium super uno peccatore*. *Ibid* 21. *Expositio auctoritatis*, *Statit populus de longe*,” &c. *Tyrwhitt*.

With maundementz for fornicacioun,  
And is y-bete at every tounes cende."

Our oste spak, "A! sir, ye schold been heende  
And curteys, as a man of your estat,  
In company we wol have no debat: 6870  
Telleth your tale, and let the Sompnour be."  
"Nay," quoth the Sompnour, "let him say to me  
What so him list; whan it cometh to my lot,  
By God! I schal him quyten every grot.  
I schal him telle which a gret honour  
Is to ben a fals slatoryng lymytour,  
And his offis I schal him telle i-wis."  
Oure host answord, "Pees, no more of this." 6880  
And after this he sayd unto the Frere,  
"Telloth forth your tale, my leve maister deere."

#### THE FRERES TALE.

WHILOM there was dwellyng in my countre  
An erchedeken, a man of gret degre,  
That boldely did excecucioun  
In punyschyng of fornicacioun,  
Of wicchecraft, and eek of baulderye,  
Of diffamacioun, and avoutrie,

6880—*Pees, no more of this.* The Harl. MS. reads, and sayg the Sompnour this.

6882—*leve.* This word is omitted in the MS. Harl., but seems necessary for the metre, and is adopted from the Lansdown MS. Tyrwhitt has *own maister*.

*The Freres Tale.*—It is probable that Chaucer took this admirable story from an old fabliau, now lost, or at least unknown. It has however been preserved in an abridged form in a tale printed in my *Selection of Latin Stories*, p. 70, under the title of *De Advocato et Diabolo*, from the *Promptuarium Nescipiorum*, a work compiled in the earlier part of the fifteenth century.

Of chirche-reves, and of testamentes,  
 Of contractes, and of lak of sacraments,  
 And eek of many another maner cryme,  
 Which needith not to reherse at this tyme, 6890  
 Of usur, and of symony also ;  
 But certes lecchours did he grettest woo ;  
 Thay schulde synge, if thay were hent ;  
 And smale tythers thay were foully schent,  
 If eny persoun wold upon hem pleyne,  
 Ther might astert him no pecunial peyne.  
 For smale tythes and for smal offrynge,  
 He made the poeple pitously to synge.  
 For er the bisschop caught hem in his hook,  
 They weren in the archedeknes book ; 6900  
 And hadde thurgh his jurediccioun  
 Power to have of hem correccioun.  
 He had a sompnour redy to his hond,  
 A slyer boy was noon in Engeland ;  
 Ful prively he had his espiaile,  
 That taughte him wher he might awayle.  
 He couthe spare of lecchours oon or tuo,  
 To techen him to four and twenty mo.  
 For though this Sompnour wood were as an hare,  
 To telle his harlottry I wol not spare ; 6910  
 For we ben out of here correccioun,  
 Thay have of us no jurediccioun,  
 Ne never schul to terme of alle her lyves.

---

6897—*smale tythes and for smal offrynge*. The sermons of the friars in the fourteenth century were most frequently designed to impress the absolute duty of paying full tithes and offerings, which were enforced by a number of legends and stories.

"Peter! so been the wommen of the styves,"  
 Quod this Sompnour, "i-put out of oure cures."  
 "Pees! with meschaunce and with mesaventures!"  
 Thus sayd our host, "and let him telle his tale.  
 Now telleth forth, although the Sompnour gale,  
 No spareth nought, myn owne maister deere."

This false theef, the sompnour, quoth the frere, 6920  
 Had alway bawdes redy to his hond,  
 As eny hawk to lure in Engelond,  
 That told him al the secrete that thay knewe,  
 For here acquaintance was not come of newe;  
 Thay were his approwours prively.  
 He took himself a gret profyt therby:  
 His maister knew nat alway what he wun.  
 Withoute maundement, a lewed man  
 He couthe sompne, up poyne of Cristes curs,  
 And thay were glad to fille wel his purs, 6930  
 And make him grette festis atte nule.  
 And right as Judas hadde purses smale  
 And was a theef, right such a theef was he,  
 His maister had not half his duesté;

---

6916—*quod this Sompnour.* The MS. Harl. reads here, *They beth i-put al out, etc.*

6932 - *Judas.* According to the mediæval legends, Judas was Christ's purse-bearer, and embezzled a part of the money which was given to him for his master. We are informed in the metrical life of Judas, in MS. Harl. 2277 (fol. 224, vo.) that—

With the oure Loverd him makede apostle to fonde his mod,  
 And with the purberrer of his paine to speke al his god;  
 For mani men gyve oure Loverd god that were of pure thought,  
 To susteyn his apostles, other made he nocht.  
 As the Judas withiane was and his myghte sounde,  
 Of oure Loverdes god that he wiste he stal al to grounde;  
 When he myghte of eche thing, the trething he woude stonde;  
 A schrewe he was al his tyf, y he mai no leng here.  
 Wel wiste oure Loverd this and al his liher dede,  
 As natheles he moste fulfillen that the prophetes rede.

He was (if I schal give him his laude)  
 A theef, a sompnour, and eek a baude.  
 And he had wenches at his retenue,  
 That whethir that sir Robert or sir Hughe,  
 Or Jak, or Rauf, or who so that it were  
 That lay by hem, thay told it in his eere. 6940  
 Thus was the wenche and he of oon assent.  
 And he wold fecche a feyned maundement,  
 And sompne hem to chapitre bothe tuo,  
 And pyle the man, and let the wenche go.  
 Than wold he sayn : "I schal, frend, for thy sake,  
 Don strike the out of oure lettres blake ;  
 The thar no more as in this cas travayle ;  
 I am thy frend ther I the may avayle."  
 Certeynly he knew of bribours mo  
 Than possible is to telle in yeres tuo : 6950  
 For in this world nys dogge for the bowe,  
 That can an hurt doer from an hol y-knowe,  
 Bet than this sompnour knew a lecchecour,  
 Or avoutier, or ellis a paramour :  
 And for that was the fruyt of al his rent,  
 Therfore theron he set al his entent.  
 And so bifel, that oones on a day  
 This sompnour, ever wayting on his pray,  
 Rod forth to sompne a widew, an old ribibe,  
 Feynyng a cause, for he wolde han a bribo. 6960  
 And happed that he say bifoire him ryde  
 A gay yeman under a forest syde :



A bow he bar, and arwes bright and kene,  
 He had upon a courtsey of grene,  
 An hat upon his heed, with fringes blake.  
 "Sir," quod this sompneur, "heyl and wel overtake!"  
 "Welcome," quod he, "and every good felawe;  
 Whider ridestow under this grene schawe?"  
 Sayde this yiman, "Wiltow for to day?"  
 This sompneur answerd, and sayde, "Nay. 6970  
 Her faste by," quod he, "is myn entent  
 To ryden, for to reysen up a rent,  
 That longith to my lordes duete."  
 "Artow than a bayely?" "Ye," quod he.  
 He durste not for verray filth and schame  
 Sayn that he was a sompneur, for the name.  
 "*De par dieux!*" quod the yoman, "lieve brother,  
 Thou art a bayly, and I am another.  
 I am unknowen, as in this contré;  
 Of thin acquaintance I wol praye the, 6980  
 And eek of brotherhood, if it yow lest.  
 I have gold and silver in my chest;  
 If that the happe come into oure schire,  
 Al schal be thin, right as thou wolt desire."  
 "*Graunt mercy,*" quod this sompneur, "by my faith!"  
 Everich in otheres hond his trouthe mith,  
 For to be sworne brotheren til thay deyen.  
 In daliaunce forth thay ride and pleyen.

6974—*Ye*. This word is omitted in the Harl. MS., probably by an oversight.

6987—*sworne brotheren*. The custom of swearing fraternity has been already alluded to in a note on line 1134.

This sompnour, which that was as ful as jangles,  
 As ful of venym ben these weryangles, 6990  
 And ever enquering upon every thing,  
 "Brother," quod he, "wher now is your dwellyng,  
 Another day if that I schuld yow seeche?"  
 This yiman him answered in softe speche;  
 "Brother," quod he, "fer in the north contré,  
 Wheras I hope somtyme I schal the se.  
 Er we depart I schal the so wel wisse,  
 That of myn hous ne schaltow never misse."

"Now brother," quod this sompnour, "I yow pray,  
 Teche me, whil that we ryden by the way, 7000  
 Syn that ye ben a baily as am I,  
 Som subtilté, as tel me faithfully  
 In myn office how that I may wynne.  
 And spare not for consciens or for synne,  
 But, as my brother, tel me how do ye."

"Now, by my trouthe, brothir myn," sayd he,  
 "As I schal telle the a faithful tale.  
 My wages ben ful streyt and eek ful smale;  
 My lord to me is hard and daungerous,  
 And myn office is ful laborous; 7010  
 And therfor by extorcious I lyve,  
 Fosoth I take al that men wil me give,  
 Algate by sleighte or by violence  
 Fro yer to yer I wynne my despence;  
 I can no better telle faithfully."

---

6995—*north contré*. According to medieval legends, hell lay to the north, (see my *Patrick's Purgatory*) so that there is irony in this reply.

7009—*hard*. The Harl. MS. reads *streyt*, probably a mere error, arising from the occurrence of the same word in the preceding line.

"Now certes," quod this sompneur, "so fare I :  
 I spare not to take, God it woot,  
 But if it be to hevy or to hoot.  
 What I may gete in counseil prively,  
 No more consciens of that have I. 7020  
 Nere myn extorcions, I might not lyven,  
 Ne of such japes I wil not be schryven.  
 Stomak ne conscienco know I noon ;  
 I schrew thes schrifte-fadres overychoon.  
 Wel be we met, by God and by seint Jame !  
 But, leve brother, telle me thy mane,"  
 Quod this sompneur. In this mene while  
 This yeman gan a litel for to smyle.  
 "Brothir," quod he, "woltow that I the telle ?  
 I am a feend, my dwellyng is in helle, 7030  
 And her I ryde about my purchasyng,  
 To wite wher men wol give me any thing.  
 My purchas is theeffect of al my rent.  
 Loke how thou ridest for the same intent  
 To wynne good, thou rekkist never how,  
 Right so fare I, for ryde I wolde now  
 Unto the worldes ende for a pray."  
 "A!" quod the sompneur, "*benedicite*, what ye say ?  
 I wende ye were a yeman trowely.  
 Ye han a mannes schap as wel as I. 7040  
 Have ye a figure than determinate

7018—to *hevy* or *to hoot*. This was a common expression. Tyrwhitt quotes an example from Froissart, v. I. c. 229, *ne laissent rien à prendre, s'il n'estoit trop chaud, trop froid, ou trop pesant*.

7041—*figure than determinate*. In this and the following lines, Chaucer enters into the ordinary philosophical speculations of his time on the nature of spirits.

In helle, ther ye ben in your estate?"

"Nay, certeynly," quod he, "ther have we non,  
But whan us likith we can take us on,  
Or ellis make yow seme that we ben schape  
Som tyme like a man, or like an ape;  
Or lik an aungel can I ryde or go;  
It is no wonder thing though it be so,  
A lousy jogelour can deceyve the,  
And, parfay, yit can I more craft than he." 7050

"Why," quod this sompnour, "ryde ye than or goon  
In sondry wyse, and nought alway in oon?"

"For," quod he, "we wol us in such forme make,  
As most abil is oure pray to take."

"What makith yow to have al this labour?"

"Ful many a cause, lieve sir sompnour,"  
Sayde this feend. "But al thing hath a tyme;  
The day is schort, and it is passed prime,  
And yit ne wan I nothing in this day;  
I wol entent to wyynyng, if I may, 7055  
And not entende oure thinges to declare:  
For, brother myn, thy wit is al to bare  
To understond although I told hem the.  
For but thou axid whi laboure we;

7044.—*take*. The Harl. MS. has *make*, but the reading of the Lansd. MS., here adopted, seems best.

7045.—*yow seme*. I.e. make it seem to you. Tyrwhitt reads *we me*, but the reading of the present text is supported by the best MSS.

7049.—*lousy jogelour*. The *jogelour* (*joculator*) was originally the minstrel, and at an earlier period was an important member of society. He always combined mimicry and mountebank performances with poetry and music. In Chaucer's time he had so far degenerated as to have become a mere mountebank, and, as it appears, to have merited the energetic epithet here applied to him.

For som tyme we ben Goddis instrumentes,  
 And menes to don his comaundementes,  
 Whan that him list, upon his creatures,  
 In divers act and in divers figures.

Withouten him we have no might certeyn,  
 If that him liste stonde ther agayn.

10.0

And som tyme at our prayer have we leewe,  
 Only the body, and not the soule grewe :  
 Witness on Jobe, whom we dide ful wo.  
 And som tyme have we might on bothe tuo,  
 This is to say of body und soule eeke.

And som tyme be we suffred for to seeke  
 Upon a man, and doon his soule unrest  
 And not his body, and al is for the best.  
 When he withstondith ours temptacioun,

It is a cause of his savacioun,

7000

Al be it so it was nought ours entent  
 He schuld be sauf, but that we wold him hent.

And som tyme we ben servaunt unto man,  
 As to therohebisshop seynt Dunstan,  
 And to thapostolis, servaunt was I."

"Yit tel me," quod the sompneur, "faithfully,  
 Make ye yow newe bodies alway  
 Of elements?" The fend answerde, "Nay :

Som tyme we feyne, and som tyme we ryse  
 With dede bodies, in ful wonder wyse,

1000

7000—*seynt Dunstan*. This probably alludes to some popular story of Dunstan now lost.

7020—*dede bodies*. The adoption of the bodies of the deceased by evil spirits in their wanderings upon earth, was an important part of the medieval superstitions of this country, and enters largely into a variety of legendary stories found in the old chronicles.

And speke renably, and as fair and wel,

As to the Phitonissa dede Samuel :

And yit wol somme say, it was not he.

I do no fors of your divinité.

But oon thing warne I the, I wol not jape,

Thou wilt algates wite how we ben schape :

Thow schalt herafter-ward, my brother deere,

Come, wher the nedith nothing for to leere,

For thou schalt by thin oughn experience

Conne in a chayer reden of this sentence, 7100

Bet than Virgile, whils he was on lyve,

Or Daunt also. Now let us ryde blyve,

For I wol holde company with the,

Til it be so that thou forsake me."

"Nay," quod the sompnour, "that schal nought betyde.

I am a yiman that knowen is ful wyde ;

My trouthe wol I hold, as in this caas.

For though thou be the devyl Sathanas,

My trouthe wol I holde to the, my brother,

As I am swore, and ech of us to other, 7110

For to be trewe bretheren in this caas ;

For bothe we goon abouten oure purchas.

Tak thou thi part, and that men wil the gyven,

And I schal myn, thus may we bothe lyven.

And if eny of us have more than other,

Let him be trewe, and part it with his brother."

"I graunte," quod the devel, "by my fay!"

And with that word thay riden forth her way ;

And right at thentryng of a townes ende,

To which this sompnour schope him for to wondo, 7120

Thay seigh a cart, that chargid was with hay,  
 Which that a carter drof forth in his way.  
 Deep was the way, for which the carte stood :  
 This carter smoot, and cryde as he wer wood,  
 "Hayt, brok ; hayt, stot ; what spare ye for the stoonen ?  
 Tho fend," quod he, "yow fech body and bones,  
 As ferforthly as ever wer ye folid !  
 So moche wo as I have with yow tholid !  
 The devyl have al, bothe cart, and hors, and hay !"  
 This sompneur sayde, "Her schal we so play." 7130  
 And ner the feend he drough, as nought no were,  
 Ful prively, and rouned in his cere :  
 "Herke, my brother, herke, by thi faith !  
 Ne herest nought thou what the carter saith ?  
 Hent it anon, for he hath given it the,  
 Bothe hay and caples, and oek his cart, pardé !"  
 "Nay," quod the devyl, "God wot, never a del,  
 It is nought his entente, trustith wel,  
 Ask it thiself, if thou not trowist me,  
 Or ellis stint a while and thou schalt se." 7140  
 This carter thakketh his hors upon the croupe,  
 And thay bygon to drawen and to stowpe.  
 "Hayt now," quod he, "ther Jhesu Crist yow blesse,  
 And al his hondwerk, bothe more and lesse !  
 That was wel twight, myn oughne lyard, boy,  
 I pray God save thy body and seint Loy.  
 Now is my cart out of the sloo pardé !"  
 "Lo ! brother," quod the feend, "what told I the ?

---

7130—*se play*. The *Lanc.* MS. reads, *have a pleie*. 'Tyrrwhitt's reading is, *have a pray*.

Her may ye seen, myn owne deere brother,  
 The carter spak oon thing, and thought another. 7150  
 Let us go forth abouten our viage ;  
 Hier wyne I nothing upon cariage."

Whan that thay comen somewhat out of toune,  
 This sompneur to his brothir gan to rounne ;  
 "Brothir," quod he, "her wonyth an old rebekke,  
 That had almost as lief to leese hir necke,  
 As for to give a peny of hir good.  
 I wol han twelf pens though that sche go wood,  
 Or I wol somone hir to oure office ;  
 And yit, God wot, I know of hir no vice. 7160  
 But for thou canst not, as in this contré,  
 Wynne thy cost, tak her ensample of me."  
 This sompneur clapped at the widowes gate ;  
 "Com out," quod he, "thou olde viritrate ;  
 I trowe thou hast som frere or prest with the."  
 "Who clappith ther?" sayd this widow, "*benedicite!*  
 God save yow, sir ! what is your swete wille?"  
 "I have," quod he, "a somonaunce of a bille,  
 Up payne of cursyng, loke that thou be  
 To morwe biforn our erchedeknes kne, 7170  
 To answer to the court of certeyn thinges."  
 "Now," quod sche, "Jhesu Crist, and king of kinges,  
 So wisly helpe me, as I ne may.  
 I have ben seek, and that ful many a day.  
 I may not goon so fer," quod sche, "ne ryde,  
 But I be deed, so prikiþ it in my syde.

---

7158—*wol han twelf*. By a curious error of the scribe, these three words are contracted into *wolf* in the Harl. MS.



May I nat aske a lybel, sir sompneur,  
 And answer ther by my procuratour  
 To suche thing as men wol oppose me?"

"Yis," quod this sompneur, "pay anon, let se, 7180

Twelf pens to me, and I the wil acquite.

I schal no profyt have therby but lite:

My mayster hath the profyt and not I.

Com of, and let me ryden hastily;

Gif me my twelf pens, I may no longer tary."

"Twelf pens?" quod scho, "now lady seinte Mary

So wisly help me out of care and synne,

This wydo world though that I schuldo wyne,

No have I not twelf pens withinne myn hold.

Ye knowen wel that I am pore and old; 7190

Kithe youre almes on me pore wrecche."

"Nay than," quod he, "the foule fend me feeche!

If I thexcuse, though thou schalt be spilt."

"Allas!" quod scho, "God wot, I have no gilt."

"Pay me," quod he, "or by the swet seint Anne!

As I wol bere away thy newe panno

For dette, which thou owest me of old,

Whan that thou madest thin housbond cokewold,

I payd at hom for thy correccioun."

"Thou lixt," quod scho, "by my savacioun, 7200

Ne was I never or now, wydow ne wyf,

Somound unto your court in al my lyf;

Ne never I was but of my body trowe.

Unto the devel rough and blak of hiewe

7186—*twelf pens*. The penny was at this time a coin of much greater relative value than the coin known under that name at the present day.

Give I thy body and the panne also!"

And whan the devyl herd hir curse so

Upon hir knees, he sayd in this manere ;

"Now, Mabely, myn owne modir deere,

Is this your wil in earnest that ye seye?"

"The devel," quod sche, "fecche him er he deye, 7210

And panne and al, but he wol him repente!"

"Nay, olde stot, that is not myn entente,

Quod this sompnour, for to repente me

For eny thing that I have had of the ;

I wold I had thy smok and every cloth."

"Now brothir," quod the devyl, "be not wroth ;

Thy body and this panne is myn by right.

Thow schalt with me to helle yit to night,

Wher thou schalt knowen of oure priveté

More than a maister of divinité." 7220

And with that word the foule fend him hente ;

Body and soule, he with the devyl wente,

Wher as the sompnours han her heritage ;

And God that maked after his ymage

Mankynde, save and gyde us alle and some,

And leeve this Sompnour good man to bycome.

"Lordyngs, I couth han told yow," quod the frere,

"Had I had leysir for this Sompnour here,

After the text of Crist, and Powel, and Jon,

And of oure other doctours many oon, 7230

Such peynes that our herte might agrise,

Al be it so, no tonge may devyse,

'Though that I might a thousand wynter telle,

The peyn of thilke cursed hous of helle.

But for to kepe us from that cursed place,  
 Wakith, and prayeth Jhesu for his grace,  
 So kepe us fro the temptour Sathanas.  
 Herknith this word, both war as in this cas.  
 The lyoun syt in his awayt alway  
 To slen the innocent, if that he may. 72  
 Disposith youre hertes to withstonde  
 The fend, that wolde make yow thral and bonde;  
 He may not tempte yow over your might,  
 For Crist wol be your champion and knight;  
 And prayeth, that oure Sompnour him repente  
 Of his mysdede, or that the fend him hente."

## THE SOMPNOURES PROLOGE.

THIS Sompnour in his styrop up he stood,  
 Upon the Frere his herte was so wood,  
 That lyk an aspen leef he quok for ire:  
 "Lordyngs," quod he, "but oon thing I desire" 72  
 I yow biseke, that of your curtesye,  
 Syn yo han herd this false Frere lye,  
 As suffrith me I may my tale telle.  
 This Frere bosteth that he knowith helle,  
 And, God it wot, that is litil wonder,  
 Freres and fecndes been but litel axender.  
 For, pardy, yo han often tyme herd telle,  
 How that a frere ravyscht was to helle  
 In spirit ones by a visioun,  
 And as an aungel lad him up and down, 74  
 To schewen him the peynes that thor were

In al the place saugh he not a frere,  
 Of other folk he saugh y-nowe in wo.  
 Unto this aungel spak this frere tho ;  
 ‘ Now, sire,’ quod he, ‘ han freres such a grace,  
 That noon of hem schal comen in this place ?’  
 ‘ Yis,’ quod this aungil, ‘ many a mylioun.’  
 And unto Sathanas he lad him down.  
 ‘ And now hath Sathanas,’ saith he, ‘ a tayl  
 Broder than of a carrik is the sayl.’ 7270  
 ‘ Hold up thy tayl, thou Sathanas,’ quod he,  
 ‘ Schew forth thyn ars, and let the frere se,  
 Wher is the nest of freres in this place.’  
 And er than half a forlong way of space,  
 Right so as bees swarmen out of an hyve,  
 Out of the develes ers thay gonne dryve,  
 Twenty thousand freres on a route,  
 And thoroughout helle swarmed al aboute,  
 And comen agen, as fast as thay may goon,  
 And in his ers thay crepen everichoon : 7280  
 He clappid his tayl agayn, and lay ful stille.  
 This frere, whan he loked had his fille  
 Upon the torment of this sory place,  
 His spirit God restored of his grace  
 Unto his body agayn, and he awook ;  
 But natheles for fere yit he quook,  
 So was the develes ers yit in his mynde,  
 That is his heritage of verray kynde.  
 God save yow alle, save this cursed Frere ;  
 My proloug wol I ende in this manere.” 7290

## THE SOMPNOURES TALE.

LORNYNGS, ther is in Engelond, I gesse,  
 A mersschly lond callod Holdornesse,  
 In which ther went a lymytour aboute  
 To preche, and eek to beggo, it is no doute.  
 And so bifel it on a day this frere  
 Had preched at a chirch in his manere,  
 And specially aboven every thing  
 Excited he the poepul in his preaching  
 To trentals, and to give for Goddis sake,  
 Wherwith men mighten holy houses make, 7300  
 Ther as divine servys is honoured,  
 Nought thor as it is wasted and devoured;  
 Neither it needeth not for to be give  
 As to possessioneres, that mow lyve,  
 Thanked be God! in wolo and abundaunce.  
 "Trentals," sayd he, "dolyveroth fro penaunce  
 Her frendes soules, as wol old as yonge,  
 Ye, whanne that thay hastily ben songe,  
 Nought for to hold a prest jolif and gay,  
 He syngith not but oon masse in a day. 7310

*The Sompnours Tale.* I have not met with this story elsewhere. It is a bitter satire on the covetousness of the friars, who were eager and officious attendants on the death-beds of those who had anything to give away. In this respect, it may be compared with the satirical notions in *Piers Ploughman's Creed*.

7292—*Holdornesse.* This district lies on the coast of Yorkshire.

7300—*houses.* The Harl. MS. reads *soules*.

7304—*possessioneres*—i.e. the regular orders of monks, who possessed landed property, and enjoyed rich revenues. The friars were forbidden by their rule to possess property, which they only did under false pretences: they depended for support on voluntary offerings.

7306—*Trentals.* A service of thirty masses, for which of course the friars required a much greater sum than for a single mass.

Delyverith out," quod he, "anoon the soules.  
 Ful hard it is, with fleischhok or with oules  
 To ben y-clawed, or brend, or i-bake :  
 Now speed yow hastily for Cristes sake."

And whan this frere had sayd al his entent,  
 With *qui cum patre* forth his way he went.  
 Whan folk in chirch had give him what hem lest,  
 He went his way, no lenger wold he rest,  
 With scrip and pyked staf, y-touked hye :  
 In every hous he gan to pore and pry, 7320  
 And beggyd mele or chese, or ellis corn.  
 His felaw had a staf typped with horn,  
 A payr of tablis al of yvory,  
 And a poyntel y-polischt fetisly,  
 And wroot the names alway as he stood,  
 Of alle folk that gaf him eny good,  
 Ascaunce that he wolde for hem preye.  
 "Gif us a busshel whet, or malt, or reye,  
 A Goddes kichil, or a trip of chese,

7311—*anoon*. This word is omitted in the Harl. MS.

7312—*fleischhok or with oules*. In the old paintings and illuminations, representing the infernal regions, the fiends are pictured tearing and piercing the wicked with hooks and other similar instruments, while they are roasting in fires and boiling in pots, or tormented in other similar manners.

7316—*qui cum patre*. The conclusion of the formula of final benediction. MS. Harl. omits the words *his way*, which seem necessary for the metre.

7329—*A Goddes kichil*. Tyrwhitt explains this phrase by a note of M. De la Monnaye on the *Contes of Bonaventure des Periers*, t. II, p. 107. *Belle serrure de Dieu*..expression du petit peuple, qui rapporte pieusement tout à Dieu.—Rien n'est plus commun dans la bouche des bonnes vieilles, que ces espèces d'Hebraïsmes : *Il m'en couste un bel ecu de Dieu ; Il ne me reste que ce pauvre enfant de Dieu ; Donnez moi une benile aumône de Dieu*. So we have two lines below, *a Goddes halpeny*.

Or elles what yow list, we may not chose ; 7330  
 A Goddes halpeny, or a massa peny ;  
 Or gif us of youre braune, if ye have eny,  
 A dagoun of your blanket, leeve dame,  
 Oure suster deer,—lo! her I write your name.—  
 Bacoun or beef, or such thing as we fynde.”  
 A stourdy harlot ay went hem byhynde,  
 That was her hostis man, and bar a sak,  
 And what men gaf hem, layd it on his bak.  
 And whan that he was out atto dore, anon  
 He planed out the names everychoon, 7340  
 That he biforn had writen in his tablis :  
 He served hem with nyfles and with fablis.

“Nay, therthoulixt, thou Sompnour,” sayd the frere.  
 “Pees,” quod our host, “for Cristes moder deere,  
 Tel forth thy tale, and spare it not at al.”  
 “So thrive I,” quod the Sompnour, “so I schal!”

So long he wente hous by hous, til he  
 Cam til an hous, ther he was wont to be  
 Refresshid mor than in an hundrid placis.  
 Syk lay the housbond man, whos that the place is, 7350  
 Bedred upon a couche lowe he lay :  
 “*Deus hic*,” quod he, “O Thomas, frend, good day!”  
 Sayde this frere al curteysly and softe.  
 “O Thomas, God yeld it yow, ful ofte  
 Have I upon this bench i-fare ful wel,  
 Her have I eten many a mery mel.”  
 And fro the bench he drof away the cat,

---

7352—*Deus hic!* God be here! the ordinary formula of benediction on entering a house.

And layd adoun his potent and his hat,  
And eek his scrip, and set him soft adoun :  
His felaw was go walkid in the toun 7360  
Forth with his knave, into the ostelrye,  
Wher as he schop him thilke night to lye.

“ O deere maister,” quod the seeke man,  
“ How have ye fare siththe March bygan ?  
I saygh yow nought this fourtenight or more.”

“ God wot,” quod he, “ labord have I ful sore ;  
And specially for thy salvacioun  
Have I sayd many a precious orisoun,  
And for myn other frendes, God hem blesse.  
I have to day ben at your chirche at messe, 7370  
And sayd a sermoun after my simple wit,  
Nought al after the text of holy wryt.  
For it is hard for yow, as I suppose,  
And therfor wil I teche yow ây the glose.  
Glosyng is a ful glorious thing certayn,  
For letter sleth, so as we clerkes sayn.  
Ther have I taught hem to be charitable,  
And spend her good ther it is resonable ;  
And ther I seigh our dame, wher is she ?”

“ Yond in the yerd I trowe that sche be,” 7380  
Sayde this man, “ and sche wil come anoon.”

“ Ey, mayster, welcome be ye, by seint Johan !”  
Sayde this wyf, “ how fare ye hertily ?”

The frere ariseth up ful curteysly,  
And her embracith in his armes narwe,  
And kist hir swete, and chirkith as a sparwe  
With his lippes : “ Dame,” quod he, “ right wel,  
As ho that is your servaunt everydol.



Thankyd be God, that yow gaf soule and lif,  
 Yit saugh I not this day so fair a wyf 7390  
 In al the chirche, God so save me."

"Ye, God amend defautes, sir," quod sche,  
 "Algates welcome be ye, by my fay."

"*Graunt mercy, dame; this have I found alway.*

But of your grete goodnes, by youre love,  
 I wolde pray yow that ye yow not greove,  
 I wil with Thomas speke a litel throwe :  
 These curates ben ful negligent and slowe  
 To grope tendurly a conscience.

In schrift and preching is my diligence, 7400  
 And study in Petres wordes and in Poules,  
 I walk and fisseche Cristen mennes soules,  
 To yelde Jhesu Crist his propre rent ;  
 To spreden his word is al myn ontent."

"Now, by your leve, o deere sir," quod sche,  
 "Chyd him right wel for seinte Trinite.

He is as angry as a pissemyre,  
 Though that he have al that he can desire,  
 Though I him wrye on night, and make him warm,  
 And over him lay my leg other myn arm, 7410  
 He groneth lik our boor, that lith in sty :  
 Othir disport of him right noon have I,  
 I may please him in no maner cas."

"O Thomas, *jeo vous dy*, 'Thomas, Thomas,  
 This makth the feend, this moste bon amoundid.  
 Ire is a thing that highe God defendid,  
 And therof wold I speke a word or tuo."

"Now, maister," quod the wyf, "er that I go,  
 What wil ye dine? I wil go thorahte."

"Now, dame," quod he, "*jeo vous dy saunz doute*, 7420  
 Have I not of a capoun but the lyvere,  
 And of your softe brede but a schivere,  
 And after that a rostyd pigges heed,  
 (But that I wold for me no best were deed)  
 Than had I with yow homly suffisaunce.  
 I am a man of litel sustinaunce.  
 My spirit hath his fostryng on the Bible.  
 The body is ay so redy and so penyble  
 To wake, that my stomak is destroyed.  
 I pray yow, dame, that ye be not anoyed, 7430  
 For I so frendly yow my counseil schewe;  
 By God! I nold not telle it but a fewe."

"Now, sir," quod sche, "but o word er I go.  
 My child is deed withinne this wykes tuo,  
 Soon after that ye went out of this toun."

"His deth saugh I by revelacioun,"  
 Sayde this frere, "at hoom in oure dortour.  
 I dar wel sayn, er that half an hour  
 After his deth, I seigh him born to blisse  
 In myn avysioun, so God me wisse. 7440  
 So did our sextein, and our fermerere,  
 That han ben trewe freres fifty yere;  
 They may now, God be thanked of his lone,  
 Maken her jubilé, and walk alloone.

---

7444—*jubilé*. "See Ducange in v. *Sempota*. Peculiar honours and immunities were granted by the Rule of St. Benedict to those monks, *qui quinquaginta annos in ordine exegerant, quos annum jubilæum exegisse vulgo dicimus*. It is probable that some similar regulation obtained in the other orders." *Tyrowhill*. The Harl. MS. has *many* instead of *fifty*, which reading is given by MS. Lansd., and would seem by the context to be the correct one.

And up I roos, and al our covent ecke,  
 With many a teere trilling on my cheeke,  
*Te Deum* was our song, and nothing ellis,  
 Withouten noys or elateryng of bellis,  
 Save that to Crist I sayd an orisoun,  
 Thankyng him of my revelacioun. 7450  
 For, sire and dame, trustith me right wel,  
 Our orisouns ben more effectuel,  
 And more we se of Goddis seere thinges,  
 Than borel folk, although that thay ben kinges.  
 We lyve in povert, and in abstinence,  
 And borel folk in riches and dispence  
 Of mete and drink, and in her ful delyt.  
 We han al this worldes lust al in despyt.  
 Lazar and Dives lyveden diversely,  
 And divers guerdoun hualde thay thereby. 7460  
 Who so wol praye, he must faste, and be clene,  
 And fatte his soule, and make his body lene.  
 We faren, as saith thapostil; cloth and food  
 Sufficeth us, though thay ben not goode.  
 The clenness and the fastyng of us frores  
 Makith that Crist acceptith our prayers.  
 Lo, Moyses fourty dayes and fourty night  
 Fasted, er that the highe God of might  
 Spak with him in the mount of Synay:

7454—*borel folk*—laymen. The term appears to have arisen from the material of their clothing which was not used by the clergy.

7458—*last al*. I have adopted this reading from the *London MS.*, as the reading of the *Harl. MS.*, *delit*, seems to have been an error of the scribe, who had in his ears the last word of the preceding line.

7461—*he quet*. These words, omitted in the *Harl. MS.*, seem necessary to the sense.

With empty wombe fastyng many a day, 7470  
 Receyved he the lawe, that was writen  
 With Goddis fynger; and Eli, wel ye witen,  
 In mount Oreb, er he had any speche  
 With highe God, that is oure lyves leche,  
 He fastid, and was in contemplacioun.  
 Aron, that had the temple in governacioun,  
 And eek the other prestes everychoon,  
 Into the temple whan thay schulden goon  
 To preye for the poeple, and doon servise,  
 Thay nolden drinken in no maner wise 7480  
 No drynke, which that dronke might hem make,  
 But ther in abstinence prey and wake,  
 Lest that thay dedin: tak heed what I say—  
 But thay ben sobre that for the pepul pray—  
 War that I say—no mor: for it suffisith.  
 Oure Lord Jhesu, as oure lore devysith,  
 Gaf us ensampil of fastyng and prayeres:  
 Therfore we mendinauntz, we sely freres,  
 Ben wedded to povert and to continence,  
 To charité, humblesse, and abstinence, 7490  
 To persecucioun for rightwisnesse,  
 To wepyng, misericord, and clennessse.  
 And therfor may ye seen that oure prayeres  
 (I speke of us, we mendeaunts, we freres)  
 Ben to the hihe God mor acceptable  
 Than youres, with your festis at your table.  
 Fro Paradis first, if I schal not lye,

---

7486—*oure lore*. The Lansd. MS. reads *holy God*, and Tyrwhitt gives *holy writ*.

Was man out chased for his glotonye,  
 And chast was man in Paradis certeyn.  
 But now herk, Thomas, what I schal the seyn, 7500  
 I no have no tixt of it, as I suppose,  
 But I schal fynd it in a maner glose;  
 That specially our swote Lord Jhesus  
 Spak this by freres, whan he sayde thus,  
 Blessed be thay that pover in spirit ben.  
 And so forth in the gospel ye may seen,  
 Whether it be likir oure professioun,  
 Or heris that swymmen in possessioun.  
 Fy on her pomp, and on her glotonye,  
 And on her lewydnesse! I hem defy. 7510  
 Me thinkith thay ben lik Jovynian,  
 Fat as a whal, and walkon as a swan;  
 Al vinolent as botel in the spence.  
 Her prayer is of ful gret reverence;  
 Whan thay for soules sayn the Psalm of David,  
 Lo, boof thay say, *Cor meum eructavit*.  
 Who folwith Cristes gospel and his lore  
 But we, that humble ben, and chast, and pore,  
 Workers of Goddes word, not auditors?  
 Therfor right as an hawk upon a sours 7520  
 Upspringeth into thaer, right so prayores  
 Of charitabil and chaste busy freres  
 Maken her sours to Goddis ceres tuo.

7511—*Jovynian*. Probably an allusion to an emperor Jovinian, celebrated in the *Gesta Romanorum* (c. lix.) and in other mediæval legends, for his pride and luxury. In the sixteenth century, the story was in France worked into a morality, under the title *L'orgueil et presumption de l'empereur Jovinian*. It is the same story as that of Robert king of Sicily, in the early English romance.

Thomas, Thomas, so mote I ryde or go,  
 And by that Lord that clepid is seint Ive,  
 Ner thou oure brother, schuldestow never thrive.  
 In oure chapitre pray we day and night  
 To Crist, that he the sende hele and might  
 Thy body for to welden hastily."

"God wot," quod he, "therof nought feele I, 7580  
 As help me Crist, as I in fewe yeeres  
 Have spendid upon many divers freres  
 Ful many a pound, yit fare I never the bet;  
 Certeyn my good have I almost byset:  
 Farwel my gold, for it is almost ago."  
 The frere answerd, "O Thomas, dostow so?  
 What needith yow dyverse freres seche?  
 What needith him that hath a parfyt leche,  
 To sechen othir leches in the toun?  
 Youre inconstance is youre confusioun. 7540  
 Holde ye than me, or elles oure covent,  
 To praye for yow insufficient?  
 Thomas, that jape is not worth a myte;  
 Youre malady is for we have to lite.  
 A! give that covent half a quarter otes;  
 A! give that covent four and twenty grotes;  
 A! give that frere a peny, and let him go:  
 Nay, nay, Thomas, it may nought be so.  
 What is a ferthing worth depart in tuelve?  
 Lo, ech thing that is ooned in himselve 7550  
 Is more strong than whan it is to-skatrid.  
 Thomas, of me thou schalt not ben y-flatrid,  
 Thow woldist have our labour al for nought.

The hihe God, that al this world hath wrought,  
 Smith, that the werkman is worthy of his hyre.  
 Thomas, nought of your tresor I desire  
 As for myself, but for that oure covent  
 To pray for yow is ay so diligent :  
 And for to buylden Cristes holy chirche.  
 Thomas, if ye wil lerne for to wirche, 7560  
 Of buyldyng up on chirches may ye fynde  
 If it be good, in Thomas lyf of Ynde.  
 Ye lye her ful of anger and of ire,  
 With which the devel set your hert on fyre,  
 And chyden her the holy innocent  
 Your wyf, that is so meke and pacient.  
 And therfor trow me, Thomas, if thou list,  
 Ne stryve nought with thy wyf, as for thi best.  
 And ber this word away now by thy faith,  
 Touchinge such thing, lo, the wise man saith : 7570  
 Withinne thin hous be thou no lyoun ;  
 To thy subjects do noon oppressioun ;  
 Ne make thyn acqweyntis fro the fle.  
 And yit, Thomas, oftsons I charge the,  
 Be war for ire that in thy bosom slepith,  
 War for the serpent, that so slely crepith  
 Under the gras, and styngith prively ;  
 Be war, my sone, and werk paciently,  
 For twenty thousand men han lost her lyves  
 For stryvyng with her lemmans and her wyves. 7580

7562—in *Thomas lyf of Ynde*. I find nothing of the sort in the life of St. Thomas. Perhaps the friar is made to quote at random, reckoning upon the ignorance of his auditor.

Now syns ye han so holy and meeke a wif,  
 What nedith yow, Thomas, to make strif?  
 Ther nys i-wis no serpent so cruel,  
 When men trede on his tail, ne half so fel,  
 As womman is, whan sche hath caught an ire;  
 Vengeans is thanne al that thay desire.  
 Schortly may no man, by rym and vers,  
 Tellen her thoughtes, thay ben so dyvers.  
 Ire is a sinne, oon the grete of sevene,  
 Abhominable to the God of hevene,  
 And to himself it is destruccioun.  
 This every lewed vicory or parsoun 7590  
 Can say, how ire engendrith homicide;  
 Ire is in soth executour of pride.  
 I couthe of ire seyn so moche sorwe,  
 My tale schulde laste til to morwe.  
 Ire is the grate of synne, as saith the wise,  
 To fle therfro ech man schuld him devyse.  
 And therfor pray I God bothe day and night,  
 An irous man God send him litil might.  
 It is greet harm, and also gret pité,  
 To set an irous man in high degré.

“ Whilom ther was an irous potestate,  
 As seith Senek, that duryng his estaat 7600  
 Upon a day out riden knightes tuo;

7587—*Schort'y, etc.* This and the following line are not in Tyrwhitt's text.

7596—*Ire, etc.* This line and the following are not in Tyrwhitt.

7600—*Senek.* This story is told of Cornelius Piso, by Seneca, *de Ira*, lib. I. c. xvi. It is also found in the *Gesta Romanorum*, where it is told of an emperor named Eraclius.



And, as fortune wolde right as it were so,  
 That oon of hem cam home, that other nought.  
 Anoon the knight bifore the juge is brought,  
 That sayde thus : thou hast thy felaw slayn,  
 For which I deme the to deoth certayn.  
 And to anothir knight comaundid he :  
 Go, lede him to the deoth, I charge the.  
 And happed, as thay wente by the weye  
 Toward the place ther he schulde deye, 7610  
 The knight com, which men wend hadde be deed.  
 Than thoughten thay it were the beste reed  
 To lede hem bothe to the juge agayn.  
 Thay sayden, Lord, the knight hath not slayn  
 His felaw ; lo, heer he stant hool on lyve.  
 Ye schal be deed, quod he, so mote I thrive !  
 That is to sayn, bothe oon, tuo, and thre.  
 And to the firste knyght right thus spak he :  
 I deme the, thou most algate be deed.  
 Than thoughte thay it were the beste rede, 7620  
 To lede him forth into a fair mede.  
 And, quod the juge, also thou most lese thin heed,  
 For thou art cause why thy felaw deyth.  
 And to the thridde felaw thus he seith,  
 Thou hast nought doon that I comaundid the.  
 And thus he let don sle hem alle thre.  
 Iroun Cambises was oek dronkelewe,  
 And ay delited him to ben a schrewe ;

7612—*Than thoughten, etc.* I retain this and the following line, because they form part of the Harl. MS., although they seem to be an unnecessary interruption of the sense. They are not in Tyrwhitt,

7627—*Cambises.* See Seneca, *de Ira*, lib. iii. c. 14.

And so bifel, a lord of his meigné,  
 That loved vertues, and eek moralité,  
 Sayd on a day bitwix hem tuo right thus :  
 A lord is lost, if he be vicious ; 7630  
 An irous man is lik a frentik best,  
 In which ther is of wisdom noon arrest ;  
 And dronkenes is eek a foul record  
 Of any man, and namly of a lord.  
 Ther is ful many an eyghe and many an eere  
 Awaytand on a lord, and he not where.  
 For Goddes love, drynk more attemperelly :  
 Wyn makith man to lese wrecchedly  
 His mynde, and eek his lymes everichoon.  
 The revers schaltow seen, quod he, anoon,  
 And prove it by thin owne experience,  
 That wyn ne doth to folk non such offence. 7640  
 Ther is no wyn byreveth me my might  
 Of hond, of foot, ne of myn eyghe sight.  
 And for despyt he dronke moche more  
 An hundrid part than he had doon byfore ;  
 And right anoon, this irous cursid wrecche  
 Let this knightes sone anoon biforn him fecche,  
 Comaundyng hem thay schuld biforn him stonde :  
 And sodeinly he took his bowe on honde,  
 And up the streng he pulled to his eere,  
 And with an arwe he slough the child right there. 7650  
 Now whethir have I a sikur hond or noon ?  
 Quod he, Is al my mynde and might agoon ?

---

7631—*An irous man*. These two lines are also peculiar to the Harl. MS.

7641—*might*. The Harl. MS. reads *wil*.

Hath wyn byrevyd mo myn eye sight?  
 What schuld I telle the answer of the knight?  
 His sone was slayn, ther is no more to say.  
 Be war therfor with lordes how ye play,  
 Syngith *Placebo*, and I schal if I can,  
 But if it be unto a pore man;  
 To a pore man men schuld his vices telle,  
 But not to a lord, they he schuld go to helle. 7660  
 Lo, irous Cirus, thilke Pereien,  
 How he destroyed the ryver of Gysen,  
 For that an hors of his was dreynt therinne,  
 Whan that he wente Babiloyne to wyne:  
 He made that the ryver was so smal,  
 That wommen mighte wade it over al.  
 Lo, what sayde he, that so wel teche can?  
 Ne he no felaw to an irous man,  
 Ne with no wood man walko by the way,  
 Lost the repent. I wol no longer say. 7670  
 Now, Thomas, leve brother, leve thin ire,  
 Thow schalt me fynde as just, as is a squire;  
 Thyn anger doth the al to sore smerte,  
 Hald not the develes knyf ay at thyn herte,  
 But schewe to me al thy confessioun."

7667—*Placebo*. "The allusion is to an Anthem in the Romish church, from Psalm cxvi. 9, which in the vulgate stands thus: *Placebo Domine, in regione vivorum*. Hence the complacent brother in the Merchant's Tale is called *Placebo*." Tyrwhitt.

7662—*Gysen*. Seneca, *de Ira*, lib. iii. c. 81. from whom the story is taken, calls the river Gyndes. Sir John Maundeville tells this story of the Euphrates.

7674—*ay*. The Harl. MS. reads *away*, which seems to destroy the metre.

“Nay,” quod this syke man, “by seynt Symoun,  
 I have ben schriuen this day of my curate;  
 I have him told holly al myn estate.  
 Nedith no more to speken of it, saith he,  
 But if me list of myn humilité.” 7680

“Gif me than of thy good to make our cloyster,”  
 Quod he, “for many a muscle and many an oyster  
 Hath ben oure foode, our cloyster to arreyse,  
 Whan other men han ben ful wel at eyse :  
 And yit, God wot, unnethe the foundement  
 Parformed is, ne of oure pavymment  
 Is nought a tyle yit withinne our wones :  
 By God, we owe yit fourty pound for stones.  
 Now help, Thomas, for him that harewed helle,  
 Or elles moote we oure bookes selle ; 7690  
 And gif yow lakke oure predicacioun,  
 Thanne goth the world al to destruccioun.  
 For who so wold us fro the world byreve,  
 So God me save, Thomas, by youre leve,  
 He wolde byreve out of this world the sonne.  
 For who can teche and werken as we conne?  
 And this is not of litel tyme,” quod he,  
 “But siththen Elye was her, or Elisee,  
 Han freres ben, fynde I of record,  
 In charité, i-thanked be oure Lord. 7700  
 Now, Thomas, help for seynte Charité.”

7687—a *tile*. The pavements were made of encaustic tiles, and therefore must have been rather costly.

7698—or *Elisee*. The Harl. MS. reads, or *Elye*, an evident corruption by the scribe.

Adoun he sette him anon on his kne,

This sike man wex welnoigh wood for ire,  
He wolde that the frere had ben on fayre  
With his fals dissimulacioun.

"Such thing as is in my possessioun,"

Quod he, "that may I geve yow and noon other:  
Yo sayn me thus, how that I am your brother."

"Yo certes," quod the frere, "trusteth wel:

I took our dame the letter, underoure sel." 7710

"Now wel," quod he, "and somewhat schal I give

Unto your holy covent whils that I lyve:

And in thyu hond thou schalt it have anon,

On this condicioun, and other noon,

That thou depart it so, my deere brother,

That every frere have as moche as other:

This schaltow swere on thy professoun,

Withouten fraude or cavillacioun."

"I swore it," quod this frere, "upon my faith."

And therwith his hond in his he laith; 7720

"Lo here myn hond, in me schal be no lak."

"Now thanne, put thyu hond down at my bak,"

Sayde this man, "and grope wel byhynde,

Bynothe my buttok, there schaltow fynde

A thing, that I have had in private."

"A!" thought this frere, "that schal go with me."

And down his hond he launcheth to the clifte,

In hope for to fynde ther a gifte.

---

7710—the letter. It was a common practice to grant under the conventual seal to benefactors and others a brotherly participation in the spiritual good works of the convent, and in their expected reward after death.

And whan this syke man felte this frere  
 Aboute his tuel grope ther and heere, 7730  
 Amyd his hond he leet the freere a fart ;  
 Ther is no capul drawyng in a cart,  
 That might have let a fart of such a soun.  
 The frere upstart, as doth a wood lyoun :  
 " A ! false cherl," quod he, " for Goddes bones !  
 This hastow in despit don for the noones :  
 Thou schalt abyge this fart, if that I may."

His meyné, which that herd of this affray,  
 Com lepard in, and chased out the frere.  
 And forth he goth with a foul angry cheere, 7740  
 And fat his felaw, there lay his stoor :  
 He lokid as it were a wylde boor,  
 And grynte with his teeth, so was he wroth.  
 A stordy paas down to the court he goth,  
 Wher as ther wonyd a man of gret honour,  
 To whom that he was alway confessour :  
 This worthy man was lord of that village.  
 This frere com, as he were in a rage,  
 Wher that this lord sat etyng at his bord :

7740. "The remainder of this tale is omitted in MSS. B. G. and Bod. B. and instead of it they give us the following *lame and impotent conclusion* :—

He ne had noght ellis for his sermon  
 To part among his brethren when he cam home.  
 And thus is this tale idon :  
 For we were almost att the toun.

I only mention this to shew what liberties some copyists have taken with our author."—*Tyrwhitt*.

7744—the court. The larger country-houses consisted generally of an inclosed court, from which circumstance this name was usually given to the manorial residence, and it has been preserved to modern times as a common term for gentlemen's seats.

Unnothe might the frere speke a word, 7760  
 Til atte last he sayde, "God yow se!"  
 This lord gan loke, and sayde, "*Benedicite!*  
 What, frere Johan! what maner world is this?  
 I se wel that som thing is amys;  
 Ye loke as though the woode were ful of thevys.  
 Sit down anoon, and tel me what your gref is,  
 And it schal ben amendit, if that I may."

"I have," quod he, "had a despit to day,  
 God yelde yow, adoun in youre vilage,  
 That in this world is noon so pore a page, 7760  
 That he nold have abhominacioun  
 Of that I have receyved in youre town:  
 And yet ne grevith me no thing so sore,  
 As that this elde chorl, with lokkes here,  
 Blasphemed hath our holy covent eke."  
 "Now, maister," quod this lord, "I yow bisceke."  
 "No maister, sir," quod he, "but servitour,  
 Though I have had in seole such honour.  
 God likith not that Ruby men us calle,  
 Neither in market, neyther in your large halle." 7770  
 "No fors," quod he, "tellith me al your greef."  
 This frere sayd, "Sire, an odious meschief  
 This day bytid is to myn ordre, and to me,  
 And so *par consequens* to ech degre  
 Of holy chirehe, God amend it soon!"  
 "Sir," quod the lord, "ye wot what is to doome;  
 Distempre yow nought, ye ben my confessor,  
 Ye ben the salt of therthe, and savvyour;  
 For Goddes love, youre patience ye holde;

Tel me your greef." And he anon him tolde 7780  
As ye han herd bifore, ye wot wel what.

The lady of that hous ay stille sat,  
Til sche had herd what the frere sayde.

"Ey, Goddes moodir!" quod sche, "blisful mayde!  
Is ther ought elles? tel me faithfully."

"Madame," quod he, "how thynke yow therby?"

"Howthatmethynkith?" quodsche; "so God mespeede!  
I say, a cherl hath doun a cherles deede.

What schuld I say? God let him never the!

His syke heed is ful of vanyté. 7790

I hold him in a maner frenesye."

"Madame," quod he, "i-wis I schal not lye,

But I in othir wise may be wreke,

I schal defame him over al wher I speke;

The false blasfememour, that chargid me

To parten that wil not departed be,

To every man y-liche, with meschaunce!"

The lord sat stille, as he were in a traunce,

And in his hert he rollid up and down,

"How had this cherl ymaginacioun 7800

To schewe such a probleme to the frere?

Never eft er now herd I of such matiere;

I trowe the devel put it in his mynde.

In arsmetrik schal ther no man fynde

Biform this day of such a questioun.

Who schulde make a demonstracioun,

'That overy man schuld have alyk his part

As of a soun or savour of a fart?



O nyce proude cherl, I schrew his face!  
 Lo, sires," quod the lord, with harde grace, 7810  
 "Who ever herde of such a thing er now?  
 To every man y-like? tel me how.  
 It is impossible, it may not be.  
 Ey, nyce cherl, God let him never the!  
 The romblyng of a fart, and every soun,  
 Nis but of aier reverberacioun,  
 And ever it wastith lyte and lyte away;  
 Ther nys no man can deme, by my say,  
 If that it were departed equally.  
 What, lo, my cherl, what, lo, how schrowedly 7820  
 Unto my confessour to day he spak!  
 I hold him corteinly demoniak.  
 Now etith your mete, and let the cherl go play,  
 Let him go honge himself on devel way!"  
 Now stood the lordes squier at the bord,  
 That carf his mete, and herde word by word  
 Of al this thing, which that I of have sayd:  
 "My lord," quod he, "be ye nought evel payd,  
 I couthe telle for a gowne-cloth  
 To yow, sir frere, so that ye be not wroth, 7830  
 How that this fart even departed schuld be  
 Among your covent, if I commaunded be."

---

7820.—*gowne-cloth*. In the middle ages, the most common rewards, and even those given by the feudal land holders to their dependants and retainers, were articles of apparel, especially the gown or outer robe. We meet with constant allusions to this custom in the romances and poetry of former days, and they sometimes occur in historical writers. Money was comparatively very scarce in the middle ages; and as the household retainers were lodged and fed, clothing was almost the only article they wanted.

"Tel," quod the lord, "and thou schalt have anoon  
 A gounne-cloth, by God and by seint Johan!"  
 "My lord," quod he, "whan that the wedir is fair,  
 Withoute wynd, or pertourbyng of ayr,  
 Let bring a large whel into this halle,  
 But loke that it have his spokes alle;  
 Twelf spokes hath a cart whel comunly;  
 And bring me twelve freres, wit ye why? 7840  
 For threttene is a covent as I gesse;  
 Your noble confessour, her God him blesse,  
 Schal parfourn up the nombre of this covent.  
 Thanne schal thay knele down by oon assent,  
 And to every spokes ende in this manere  
 Ful sadly lay his nose schal a frere;  
 Your noble confessour ther, God him save,  
 Schal hold his nose upright under the nave.  
 Than schal this churl, with bely stif and tought  
 As eny tabor, hider ben y-brought; 7850  
 And sette him on the whele of this cart  
 Upon the nave, and make him lete a fart,  
 And ye schul seen, up peril of my lif,  
 By verray proef that is demonstratif,  
 That equally the soun of it wol wende,  
 And eek the stynk, unto the spokes ende;

---

7841—*threttene*. The regular number of monks or friars in a convent had been fixed at twelve, with their superior; in imitation, it is said, of the number of twelve apostles and their divine master. The larger religious houses were considered as consisting of a certain number of convents. Thus Thorn, speaking of the abbot of St. Augustine's at Canterbury, says, Anno Domini m.c.xlvi. iste Hugo reparavit antiquum numerum monachorum istius monasterii, et erant lx. monachi professi præter abbatem, *hoc est, quinque conventus* in universo.—*Decem Scriptores*, col. 1807.

Save that this worthy man, your confessour,  
 (Bycause he is a man of gret honour)  
 Schal have the firste fruyt, as reson is.  
 The noble usage of frores is this, 7800  
 The worthy men of hem first schal be served.  
 And certeynly he hath it wel deserved ;  
 He hath to day taught us so mochi good,  
 With preching in the pulpit ther he stood,  
 That I may vouchesauf, I say for me,  
 He hadde the firste smel of fartes thre,  
 And so wold al his covent hardily,  
 He berith him so fair and holily."

The lord, the lady, and ech man, sauf the frere,  
 Sayde that Jankyn spak in this matiere 7870  
 As wel as Euclide, or elles Phtolome.  
 Touchand the cherl, thay sayd that subtilte  
 And high wyt made him spoken as he spak ;  
 He nas no fool, ne no demoniak :  
 And Jankyn hath i-wonne a new gowne ;  
 My tale is don, we ben almost at tounne.

#### THE CLERK OF OXENFORD'S PROLOGUE.

" SIR Clerk of Oxenford," our hoste sayde,  
 " Ye ryde as stille and coy as doth a mayde,  
 Were noww spoused, sitting at the bord ;  
 This day ne herd I of your mouth a word. 7940  
 I trowe ye study aboute som sophime :  
 But Salomon saith, every thing hath tyme.  
 For Goddis sake ! as both of better cheere,  
 It is no tyme for to stody here.  
 Tel us som mery tale, by your fay ;

For what man is entred unto play,  
 He moot nedes unto that play assent.  
 But prechith not, as freres doon in Lent,  
 To make us for our olde synnes wepe,  
 Ne that thy tale make us for to slepe. 7890  
 Tel us som mery thing of adventures.  
 Youre termes, your colours, and your figures,  
 Keep hem in stoor, til so be that ye endite  
 High style, as whan that men to kynges write.  
 Spekith so playn at this tyme, I yow pray,  
 That we may understonde what ye say."

This worthy Clerk benignely answerde ;  
 "Sir host," quod he, "I am under your yerde,  
 Ye have of us as now the governaunce,  
 And therfor wol I do yow obeissaunce, 7900  
 Als fer as resoun askith hardily :  
 I wil yow telle a tale, which that I  
 Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk,  
 As proved by his wordes and his werk.  
 He is now deed, and nayled in his chest,  
 Now God give his soule wel good rest!  
 Fraunces Petrark, the laureat poete,  
 Highte this clerk, whos rethorique swete  
 Enlumynd al Ytail of poetrie,  
 As Linian did of philosophie, 7910  
 Or lawue, or other art particulere ;  
 But deth, that wol not suffre us duellen heere,  
 But as it were a twyncling of an ye,  
 Hem bothe hath slayn, and alle we schul dye.

---

7912—*But deth.* Petrarch died in 1374. Linian, who was celebrated as a lawyer and as a philosopher, died about 1378.

But forth to telle of this worthy man,  
 That taughte me this tale, as I bigan,  
 I say that he first with heigh stile enditith  
 (Er he the body of his tale writith)  
 A prohemo, in the which descrivith he  
 Piemounde, and of Salucos the contré, 7920  
 And spekih of Appenyne the hulles hye,  
 That ben the boundes of al west Lombardye :  
 And of mount Vesulus in special,  
 Wher as the Poo out of a welle smal  
 Takith his firste springyng and his sours,  
 That ost-ward ay encreseoth in his cours  
 To Emyl-ward, to Foraro, and to Venise,  
 To which a long thing were to devyse.  
 And trowely, as to my juggement,  
 Mo thinketh it a thing importinent, 7930  
 Save that he wold conveyen his matiere :  
 But this is the tale which that ye schuln heere."

## THE CLERKES TALE.

THER is at the west ende of Ytaile,  
 Doun at the root of Vesulus the colde,  
 A lusty playn, abundaunt of vitailo,

7927—*Emylward*. "One of the regions of Italy was called *Æmilia*, from the *Via Æmilia*, which crossed it from Piacentia to Rimini. Piacentia stood upon the Po. Plinio, *lxx. Ant. Rom.* in v. *VIA ÆMILIA*, Petraroh's description of this part of the Po is a little different. He speaks of it as dividing the *Æmillan* and *Flaminian* regions from Venice—*Æmillan atque Flaminiam Venetiamque discriminans*. But our Author's *Emilie* is plainly taken from him."—*Tyrwhitt*.

*The Clerkes Tale*. The popular story of *Griseldis*, which has appeared in so great a variety of forms from the days of Petraroh almost to the present time, is so well known, that it is hardly necessary to say more than that Chaucer translates it closely from Petraroh's Latin romance *De obedientia et fide uxoria Mythologia*.

Wher many a tour and toun thou maist byholde,  
That foundid were in tyme of fadres olde,  
And many anothir delitable sight,  
And Saluces this noble contray hight.

A marquys whilom duellid in that lond, 7940  
As were his worthy eldris him bifore,  
And obeisaunt ay redy to his hond,  
Were alle his liegis, bothe lesse and more:  
Thus in delyt he lyveth and hath don yore,  
Biloved and drad, thurgh favour of fortune,  
Bothe of his lordes and of his comune.

Therwith he was, as to speke of lynage,  
The gentileste born of Lumbardye,  
A fair persone, and strong, and yong of age,  
And ful of honour and of curtesie : 7950  
Discret y-nough his contré for to gye,  
Savyng in som thing he was to blame,  
And Wautier was this yonge lordes name.

I blame him thus, that he considered nought  
In tyme comyng what mighte bityde,  
But on his lust present was al his thought,  
As for to hauke and hunte on every syde :  
Wel neigh al othir cures let he slyde,  
And eek he nolde (that was the worst of al)  
Wedde no wyf for no thing that might bifal. 7960

Only that poynt his poeple bar so sore,  
That flokmel on a day to him thay went,  
And oon of hem, that wisest was of lore,  
(Or elles that the lord wolde best assent  
That he schuld telle him what his poeple ment,

(Or ellis couthe he schewe wel such matiere)  
He to the marquys sayd as ye schuln hiere.

“ O noble marquys, youre humanité  
Assureth us and giveth us hardynesse,  
As ofte as tyme is of necessité, 7970  
That we to yow may telle oure hevynesse :  
Acceptith, lord, now of your gentillesse,  
That we with pitous hert unto yow playne,  
And let youre oeris my vois not disloyne.

“ And have I nought to doon in this matere  
More than another man hath in this place,  
Yit for as moche as ye, my lord so deere,  
I han alway schewed me favour and grace,  
I dar the better ask of yow a space  
Of audience, to schewen oure request, 7980  
And ye, my lord, to doon right as yow lest.

“ For certes, lord, so wel us likith yow  
And al your work, and ever han doon, that we  
No couthen not ourselve devyssen how  
We mighte lyve more in felicité :  
Save oon thing, lord, if that your wille be,  
That for to be a weddid man yow list,  
Than were your popel in sovereign hertes rest.

“ Bowith your neck undir that blisful yok  
Of sovereigneté, nought of servise, 7990  
Which that men clepe spousail or wedlok :  
And thanketh, lord, among your thoughtes wise,

7972—*gentillesse*. The Harl. MS. reads *necessaire*, a mere repetition of the conclusion of l. 7970.

7980. The reading of the Harl. MS. is *And audience to asken oure request*.

How that our dayes passe in sondry wyse ;  
 For though we slepe, or wake, or rome, or ryde,  
 Ay fleth the tyme, it wil no man abyde.

“ And though your grene youthe floure as yit,  
 In crepith age alway as stille as stoon,  
 And deth manasith every age, and smyt  
 In ech estat, for ther ascapith noon :

And as certeyn, as we knowe everychon 8000  
 That we schuln deye, as uncerteyn we alle  
 Ben of that day that deth schal on us falle.

“ Acceptith thanne of us the trewe entent,  
 That never yit refusid youre hest,  
 And we wil, lord, if that ye wil assent,  
 Chese yow a wyf, in schort tyme atte lest,  
 Born of the gentilest and the heighest  
 Of al this lond, so that it oughte seme  
 Honour to God and yow, as we can deme.

“ Deliver us out of al this busy drede, 8010  
 And tak a wyf, for hihe Goddes sake :  
 For if it so bifel, as God forbede,  
 That thurgh your deth your lignage schuld aslake,  
 And that a straunge successour schuld take  
 Your heritage, o! wo were us on lyve :  
 Wherfor we pray yow hastily to wyve.”

Her meeke prayer and her pitous chere  
 Made the marquys for to han pité.

“ Ye wolde,” quod he, “ myn owne poeple deere,  
 To that I never erst thought, constreigne me. 8020  
 I me rejoysid of my liberté,  
 That selden tyme is founde in mariage :



Ther I was fre, I mot ben in servage.

“ But natholes I so youre trewe entent,  
And trust upon your witt, and have doon ay :  
Wherfor of my fre wil I wil assent  
To wedde me, as soon as ever I may.  
But ther as ye have profred me to day  
To chose me a wyf, I wol relese  
That choys, and pray yow of that profre cesso. 8030

“ For God it woot, that childer ofte been  
Unlik her worthy eldris hem bifore ;  
Bounté cometh al of God, nought of the streen  
Of which thay ben engendrid and i-bore.  
I trust in Goddes bounté, and therfore  
My mariage, and myn estat and rest,  
I him bytake, he may doon as him lest.

“ Let me alloon in chesying of my wif,  
That charge upon my bak I wil endure :  
But I yow pray, and charge upon your lyf. 8040  
That what wyf that I take, ye me assure  
To worschip whil that hir lif may endure,  
In word and work, bothe heer and every where,  
As sche an emperoures daughter were.

“ And forthermor thus schul ye swer, that ye  
Agoins my chois schuln never grucche no stryve.  
For sins I schal forgo my liberté  
At your request, as ever mot I thrive,  
Ther as myn hert is set, ther wil I wyve :  
And but ye wil assent in such manere, 8050

I pray yow spek no more of this matiere."

With hertly wil thay sworn and assentyn  
To al this thing, ther sayde no wight nay,  
Bysechyng him of grace, er that thay wentyn,  
That he wold graunten hem a certeyn day  
Of his spousail, as soone as ever he may;  
For yit alway the peple som what dredde,  
Lest that the marquys wolde no wyf wedde.

He graunted hem a day, such as him lest,  
On which he wolde be weddid sicurly; 8060  
And sayd he dede al this at her requeste.  
And thay with humble hert ful buxomly  
Knelyng upon her knees ful reverently  
Him thanken alle, and thus thay have an ende  
Of her entent, and hom agein they wende.

And herupon he to his officeris  
Comaundith for the feste to purveye.  
And to his privé knightes and squyeres  
Such charge gaf as him list on hem leye :  
And thay to his comaundement obeye, 8070  
And ech of hem doth his diligence  
To doon unto the feste reverence.

*Pars secunda.*

Nought fer fro thilke palys honorable,  
Wher as this marquys schop his mariage,  
Ther stood a throp, of sighte delitable,  
In which that pore folk of that vilage  
Hadden her bestes and her herburgage,  
And after her labour took her sustienauce,  
After the erthe gaf hem abundaunce.

Among this pore folk ther dwelt a man, 8080  
 Which that was holden porest of hem alle :  
 But heighe God som tyme sende can  
 His grace unto a litel oxe stalle :  
 Janicula men of that throop him calle.  
 A doughter had he, fair y-nough to sight,  
 And Grisildes this yonge mayden hight.

But for to speke of hir vertuous beaute,  
 Than was sche oon the fayrest under sonne :  
 For porely i-fostred up was sche,  
 No licorous lust was in hir body ronne ; 8090  
 Wel ofter of the welle than of the tonne  
 Sche dronk, and for sche wolde vertu please,  
 Sche knew wel labour, but noon ydel ease.

But though this mayden tender were of age,  
 Yet in the brest of hir virginite  
 Ther was enclosed rype and sul corrage :  
 And in gret reverence and charite  
 Hir olde pore fader fostred sche :  
 A fewe schoep spyunnyng on the feld sche kept,  
 Sche nold not ben ydel til sche slept. 8100

And whan sche com hom sche wolde brynge  
 Wortis and other herbis tymes ofte,  
 The which sche schred and seth for hir lyvyng,  
 And made hir bed ful hard, and no thing softe :  
 And ay sche kept hir fadres lif on lofte,  
 With every obeissance and diligence,  
 That child may do to fadres reverence.

---

8088—*mayden*. The Harl. MS. reads *doughter*, which probably is only an accidental repetition of the word in the preceding line.

Upon Grisildes, the pore creature,  
 Ful ofte sithes this marquys set his ye,  
 As he on huntynge rood peraventure. 8110

And whan it fel he mighte hir espye,  
 He not with wantoun lokyng of folye  
 His eyghen cast upon hir, but in sad wyse  
 Upon hir cheer he wold him oft avise,

Comendyng in his hert hir wommanhede,  
 And eek hir vertu, passyng any other wight  
 Of so yong age, as wel in cheer as dede.  
 For though the poeple have no gret insight  
 In vertu, he considereth aright  
 Hir bounté, and desposed that he wolde 8120  
 Wedde hir oonly, if ever he wedde scholde.

The day of weddyng cam, but no wight can  
 Telle what womman it schulde be ;  
 For which mervayle wondrith many a man,  
 And sayden, whan thay were in priveté,  
 “ Wol nought our lord yit leve his vanité ?  
 Wol he not wedde ? allas, allas the while !  
 Why wol he thus himself and us bigyle ? ”

But natheles this marquys hath doon make  
 Of gemmes, set in gold and in asure, 8130  
 Broches and rynges, for Grisildes sake,  
 And of hir clothing took he the mesure,  
 By a mayde y-lik to hir of stature,  
 And eek of other ornamentes alle  
 That unto such a weddyng schulde falle.

The tyme of undern of the same day  
 Approchith, that this weddyng schulde be,

And al the palys put was in array,  
 Bothe halle and chambur, y-lik here degré,  
 Houses of office stuffid with plenté 8140  
 Ther maystow se of deoyntovous vitayle,  
 That may be founde, as for as lastith Itale.

This real marquys, richely arrayd,  
 Lordes and ladyes in his compaignye,  
 The which unto the feste were prayed,  
 And of his retenu the bachelerie,  
 With many a soun of sondry melodye,  
 Unto the vilage, of which I tolde,  
 In this array the right way han they holde.

Grysild of this (God wol) ful innocent, 8150  
 That for hir schapen was al this array,  
 To focche water at a wolle is went,  
 And cometh hom as soone as scho may.  
 For wol scho had herd say, that ilke day  
 The marquys schulde wedde, and, if scho might,  
 Scho wold have soyen somewhat of that sight.

Scho sayd, "I wol with other maydenes stonde,  
 That ben my felawes, in oure dore, and noon  
 The marquysesse, and therfore wol I fonde  
 To don at hom, as soone as it may be, 8160  
 The labour which that longeth unto me,  
 And thanno may I at leysir hir byholde,  
 And scho the way into the castel holde."

And as scho wold over the threisschfold goon,

8139—*y-lik here degré*. Other MSS. have *echc in his degré*, which is perhaps the better reading.

8143—*richely*. The reading of the Harl. MS. is *reully*.

The marquys cam and gan hir for to calle.  
 And sche set down hir water-pot anoon  
 Bisides the threischfold of this oxe stalle,  
 And down upon hir knees sche gan falle,  
 And with sad countenaunce knelith stille,  
 Til sche had herd what was the lordes wille. 8170

This thoughtful marquys spak unto this mayde  
 Ful soberly, and sayd in this manere :

“Wher is your fader, Grisildes?” he sayde.  
 And sche with reverence in humble cheere  
 Answerd, “ Lord, he is al redy heere.”  
 And in sche goth withouten lenger let,  
 And to the marquys sche hir fader fet.

He by the hond than takith this olde man,  
 And sayde thus, whan he him had on syde :

“Janicula, I neither may ne can 8180  
 Lenger the plesauns of myn herte hyde ;  
 If that ye vouchesauf, what so bytyde,  
 Thy doughter wil I take er that I wende  
 As for my wyf, unto hir lyves ende.

“ Thow lovest me, I wot it wel certeyn,  
 And art my faithful leige-man i-bore,  
 And al that likith me, I dar wel sayn,  
 It likith the, and specially therfore  
 Tel me that poynt, as ye have herd bifore,  
 If that thou wolt unto that purpos drawe, 8190  
 To take me as for thy sone in lawe.”

The sodeyn caas the man astoneyd tho,  
 That reed he wax, abaischt, and al quakyng  
 He stood, unnethe sayd he wordes mo,

Hir heeres han thay kempt, that lay untressed  
 Ful rudely, and with hir fynghes smale  
 A coroun on hir heed thay han i-dressed,  
 And set hir ful of nowehes gret and smale.  
 Of hir array what schuld I make a tale?  
 Unnothe the poeple hir knew for hir fairnesse, 81  
 Whan scho translated was in such richesse.

This marquis hath hir spoused with a ryng  
 Brought for the same cause, and than hir sette  
 Upon an hors snow-whyt, and wel amblyng,  
 And to his palys, er he lenger lette,  
 (With joyful poeple, that hir ladde and mette)  
 Conveyed hire, and thus the day thay spende  
 In revel, til the sonne gan descende.

And schortly forth this tale for to chace,  
 I say, that to this nowe marquisesse 82  
 God hath such favour sent hir of his grace,  
 That it no somyl not by liklynesse  
 That scho was born and fed in rudenesse,  
 As in a cote, or in an oxe stalle,  
 But norischt in an emperoures halle.

To every wight scho waxen is so deere,  
 And worschipful, that folk ther scho was born,  
 And from hir burthe knew hir yer by yer,  
 Unneth trowed thay, but dorst han sworn,  
 That to Janicle, of which I spak bifore, 83  
 Scho doughter were, for as by conjecture  
 Hem thought scho was another creature.

For though that ever vertuous was scho,  
 Scho was encrowed in such excellence

Of thewes goode, i-set in high bounté,  
 And so discret, and fair of eloquence,  
 So benigne, and so digne of reverence,  
 And couthe so the poeples hert embrace,  
 That ech hir loveth that lokith in hir face.

Nought oonly of Saluce in the toun 8290  
 Publissched was the bounté of hir name,  
 But eek byside in many a regioun,  
 If oon sayd wel, another sayd the same :  
 So sprad of hire heigh bounté the fame,  
 That men and wommen, as wel yong as olde,  
 Gon to Saluce upon hir to byholde.

Thus Walter louly, nay but really,  
 Weddid with fortunat honesteté,  
 In Goddes pees lyveth ful esily  
 At home, and outward grace y-nough hath he ; 8300  
 And for he saugh that under low degré  
 Was ofte vertu y-hid, the poeple him helde  
 A prudent man, and that is seen ful selde.

Nought oonly this Grisildes thurgh hir witte  
 Couthe al the feet of wify homlynesse,  
 But eek whan that the tyme required it,  
 The comun profyt couthe sche redresse :  
 Ther nas discord, rancour, ne hevynesse  
 In al that lond, that sche ne couthe appese,  
 And wisly bryng hem alle in rest and ese. 8310

---

8305—*homlynesse*. The Harl. MS. reads *humblese* ; but the context shows that the reading adopted in the text is the right one. She not only knew how to attend to the domestic affairs of her lord's household, (wify homlynesse) but when time or occasion required it she could redress the common profit of his subjects.



But natholes withoute youre witynge  
 Wol I not doon; but this wol I," quod he,  
 "That ye to me assent as in this thing. 8370  
 Schew now your paciens in your wirching,  
 That thou me hightest and swor in yon village,  
 That day that makod was oure mariage."

Whan sche had herd al this, sche nought ameevyd  
 Neyther in word, in cheer, or countenaunce,  
 (For, as it somed, sche was nought agreed);  
 Sche sayde, "Lord, al lith in your plesaunce;  
 My child and I, with hertly obeisaunce,  
 Ben youre al, and ye may save or spille  
 Your oughno thing: workith after your wille. 8380

"Ther may no thing, so God my soule save,  
 Liken to yow, that may displezen me:  
 No I desire no thing for to have,  
 Ne drede for to lose, save conly ye:  
 This wil is in myn hert, and ny schal be,  
 No length of tyme or deth may this deface,  
 No chaungo my corrago to other place."

Glad was this marquis for hir unweryng.  
 But yit he feyned as he were not so.  
 Al dreery was his cheer and his loking. 8390  
 Whan that he schold out of the chambre go.  
 Soon after this, a forlong way or tuo,  
 He prively hath told al his entent  
 Unto a man, and unto his wyf him sent.

A maner sergeant was this prive man,  
 The which that faithful oft he founden hadde  
 In thinges grote, and eek such folk wel can

Don execucioun in thinges badde :  
 The lord knew wel that he him loved and dradde.  
 And whan this sergeant wist his lordes wille, 8400  
 Into the chamber he stalked him ful stille.

“Madame,” he sayd, “ye most forgive it me,  
 Though I do thing to which I am constreynit :  
 Ye ben so wys, that ful wel knowe ye,  
 That lordes hestes mow not ben i-feynit.  
 They mowe wel be biwaylit or compleynit ;  
 But men moot neede unto her lust obeye,  
 And so wol I, ther is no more to seye.

“This child I am comaundid for to take.”  
 And spak no more, but out the child he hent 8410  
 Dispitously, and gan a chiere make,  
 As though he wold han slayn it, er he went.  
 Grisild moot al suffer and al consent ;  
 And as a lamb, sche sitteth meeke and stille,  
 And let this cruel sergeant doon his wille.

Suspecious was the defame of this man,  
 Suspect his face, suspect his word also,  
 Suspect the tyme in which he this bigan :  
 Allas ! hir doughter, that sche loved so,  
 Sche wend he wold han slayen it right tho, 8420  
 But natheles sche neyther weep ne siked,  
 Conformyng hir to that the marquis liked.

But atte last speke sche bigan,  
 And mekely sche to the sergeant preyde,

---

1416—*Suspecious*. The words of Petrarch are: “*Suspecta viri fama, suspecta facies, suspecta hora, suspecta erat oratio, quibus et si clare occisum iri dulce filiam intelligeret.*”

So as he was a worthy gentilman,  
 That sche most kisse hir child, er that it deyde :  
 And on hir arm this litel child sche leyde,  
 With ful sad face, and gan the child to blesse,  
 And lullyd it, and after gan it kesse.

And thus sche sayd in hir benigne vois : 8430  
 "Farwol, my child, I schal the never see,  
 But sith I the have marked with the cros,  
 Of thilke fader blessed mot thou be,  
 That for us deyde upon a cros of tre :  
 Thy soule, litel child, I him bytake,  
 For this night schaltow deyen for my sake."

I trowe that to a norice in this cas  
 It had ben hard this rowthe for to see :  
 Wel might a moder than have cryed alas,  
 But natholes so sad stedefast was sche, 8440  
 That sche endured al adversite,  
 And to the sergeant mekely sche sayde,  
 "Have her agayn your litel yonge mayde.

"Goth now," quod scho, "and doth my lordes heste  
 But o thing wil I pray yow of your grace,  
 That but my lord forbode yow atte leste,  
 Burieth this litel body in som place,  
 That bestes ne no briddes it to-race,"  
 But he no word wil to the purpos say,  
 But took the child and went upon his way. 8450

This sergeant com unto this lord agayn,  
 And of Grisildes wordes and hir cheere  
 He tolde poynt for poynt, in schort and playn,

And him presentith with his doughter deere.  
 Somwhat this lord hath rewthe in his manere,  
 But natheles his purpos huld he stille,  
 As lordes doon, whan thay woln have her wille ;

And bad the sergeaunt that he prively  
 Scholde this childe softe wynde and wrappe,  
 With alle circumstaunces tendurly, 8460  
 And cary it in a cofre, or in his lappe ;  
 Upon peyne his heed of for to swappe  
 That no man schulde knowe of this entent,  
 Ne whens he com, ne whider that he went ;

But at Boloigne, to his suster deere,  
 That thilke tyme of Panik was countesse,  
 He schuld it take, and schewe hir this matiere,  
 Byseching hir to doon hir busynesse  
 This child to fostre in alle gentillesse,  
 And whos child that it was he bad hir hyde 8470  
 From every wight, for ought that mighte bytyde.

The sergeaunt goth, and hath fulfild this thing.  
 But to this marquys now retourne we ;  
 For now goth he ful fast ymaginyng,  
 If by his wyves cher he mighte se,  
 Or by hir word apperceyve, that sche  
 Were chaunged, but he hir never couthe fynde,  
 But ever in oon y-like sad and kynde.

---

8466—*of Panik*. "Quieto omni quanta possit diligentia Bononiam deferret, ad sororem suam, quæ illic comiti *de Panico* nupta erat, eamque sibi traderet alendam materno studio charis moribus instruendam," etc. Tyrwhitt, rather hastily, changed the name to Pavie in his text, and, although he corrected himself in the notes which were printed after the text, the error has been retained in subsequent editions.

As glad, as humble, as busy in servise 8480  
 And eek in love, as sche was wont to be,  
 Was scho to him, in every manor wyse :  
 Ne of hir doughter nought o word spak scho :  
 Non accident for noon adversite  
 Was seyn in hir, ne never hir doughter name  
 No nempnyd scho, in earnest ne in game.

*Incipit quarta pars.*

In this estaat ther passed ben foure yer  
 Er scho with childe was, but, as God wolde,  
 A knave child scho bar by this Waltier,  
 Ful gracious, and fair for to biholde :  
 And whan that folk it to his fader tolde, 8490  
 Nought oonly he, but al his contré, merye  
 Was for this child, and God thay thank and herie.

Whan it was tuo yer old, and fro the brest  
 Departed fro his noris, upon a day  
 This markys caughte yit another lest  
 To tempt his wif yit after, if he may.  
 O! needles was scho tempted in assay.  
 But weddid mon ne knowen ne mesure,  
 Whan that thay fynde a pncient creature.  
 " Wyf," quod this marquys, " ye han herd er this 8500  
 My peple sokly berith oure mariage,  
 And namly syn my sone y-loron is,  
 Now is it wors than ever in al our age :  
 The murmur sloth myn hert and my corrupe,  
 For to myn eeris cometh the voia so suerte,  
 That it wel neigh destroyed hath myn herte.  
 " Now say thay thus, Whan Wauter is agoun,

Than schal the blood of Janicle succede,  
And ben our lord, for other have we noon :  
Suche wordes saith my poeple, out of drede. 8510  
Wel ought I of such murmur taken heede,  
For certeynly I drede such sentence,  
Though thay not pleynly speke in my audience.

“ I wolde lyve in pees, if that I might :  
Wherfor I am disposid outrely,  
As I his suster servede by night,  
Right so thynk I to serve him prively.  
This warn I you, that ye not sodeinly  
Out of your self for no thing schuld outraye,  
Beth pacient, and therof I yow pray.” 8520

“ I have,” quod sche, “ sayd thus and ever schal,  
I wol no thing, ne nil no thing certayn,  
But as yow list : nought greveth me at al,  
Though that my doughter and my sone be slayn  
At your comaundement : this is to sayne,  
I have not had no part of children twayne,  
But first syknes, and after wo and payne.

“ Ye ben oure lord, doth with your owne thing  
Right as yow list, axith no red of me :  
For as I left at hom al my clothing 8530  
Whan I first com to yow, right so,” quod sche,  
“ Left I my wille and my liberté,  
And took your clothing : wherfor I yow preye,  
Doth youre plesaunce, I wil youre lust obeye.

“ And certes, if I hadde prescience  
Your wil to knowe, er ye youre lust me tolde,  
I wold it doon withoute negligence :

But now I wot your lust, and what ye wolde,  
Al your plesaunce ferm and stable I holde,  
For wist I that my deth wold doon yow ease, 8540  
Right gladly wold I deyo, yow to please.

“Deth may make no comparisoun  
Unto your love.” And whan this marquys say  
The constance of his wyf, he cast adoun  
His eyghen tuo, and wondrith that sche may  
In pacience suffre as this array :  
And forth he goth with drery countenaunce,  
But to his hert it was ful gret plesaunce.

This ugly sergeaunt in the same wise  
That he hir doughter fette, right so he, 8550  
Or worse, if men worse can devyse,  
Hath hent hir sone, that ful was of beauté :  
And ever in oon so pacient was sche,  
That sche no cheere made of hevynesse,  
But kist hir sone, and after gan him blesse.

Save this sche prayed him, if that he mighte,  
Hir litel sone he wold in eorthe grave,  
His tendre lymes, delicate to sight,  
From foules and from bestes him to save.  
But sche noon answer of him mighte have, 8560  
He went his way, as him no thing ne rought,  
But to Boleyn he tenderly it brought.

This marquis wondreth ever the lenger the more  
Upon hir pacience, and if that he  
Ne hadde sothly knowen therbifore,  
That parfytly hir children loved sche,  
He wold have wend that of som subtilté

And of malice, or of cruel corrage,  
That sche had suffred this with sad visage.

But wel he knew, that, next himself, certayn 8570  
Sche loved hir children best in every wise.  
But now of wommen wold I aske fayn,  
If these assayes mighten not suffice?  
What couthe a stourdy housebonde more devyse  
To prove hir wyfhode, and hir stedefastnesse,  
And he contynuyng ever in stourdynesse?

But ther ben folk of such condicioun,  
That, whan thay have a certeyn purpos take,  
Thay can nought stynt of her entencioun,  
But, right as thay were bounden to a stake, 8580  
Thay wil not of her firste purpos slake :  
Right so this marquys fullich hath purposed  
To tempt his wyf, as he was first disposed.

He wayteth, if by word or countenaunce  
That sche to him was chaunged of corage :  
But never couthe he fynde variaunce,  
Sche was ay oon in hert and in visage ;  
And ay the ferther that sche was in age,  
The more trewe, if that were possible,  
Sche was to him, and more penyble. 8590

For which it semyd this, that of hem tuo  
Ther nas but oo wil ; for as Walter lest,  
The same plesaunce was hir lust also ;  
And, God be thanked, al fel for the best.  
Sche schewed wel, for no worldly unrest  
A wyf, as of hir self, no thing ne scholde  
Wylne in effect, but as hir housbond wolde.



The selaunder of Walter ofte and wyde spradde,  
 That of a cruel hert he wikkedly,  
 For he a pore womman weddid hadde, 8000  
 Hath morthrid bothe his children prively :  
 Such murmur was among hem comunly.  
 No wonder is : for to the popes eere  
 Ther com no word, but that thay morthrid were.

For which, wher as his peple therbyfore  
 Had loved him wel, the selaunder of his diffame  
 Made hem that thay him hatode therefore :  
 To ben a morderer is an hateful name.  
 But natheles, for earnest or for game,  
 He of his cruel purpos nolde stente, 8010  
 To tempt his wyf was set al his entente.

Whan that his doughter twelf yer was of age,  
 He to the court of Rome, in suche wise  
 Enformed of his wille, sent his message,  
 Comaundyng hem, such bulles to devyse,  
 As to his cruel purpos may suffice,  
 How that the pope, as for his popes roste,  
 Bad him to wedde another, if him leste.

I say, he bad, thay schulde countrefete  
 The popes bulles, makyng mencion 8020  
 That he hath leve his firste wyf to lete,  
 As by the popes dispensacioun,  
 To stynte rancour and discencioun  
 Bitwix his peple and him : thus sayd the bulle.  
 The which thay han publisshid atte fulle.

The rude poepol, as it no wonder is,  
 Wende ful wel that it had be right so.

But whan these tydynges come to Grisildis,

I deeme that hir herte was ful wo ;

But sche y-like sad for evermo

8630

Disposid was, this humble creature,

Thadversité of fortun al tendure ;

Abydyng ever his lust and his plesaunce,

To whom that sche was give, hert and al,

As to hir verray worldly suffisaunce.

But schortly if I this story telle schal,

This marquys writen hath in special

A letter, in which he schewith his entent,

And secrely he to Boloyne it sent.

To therl of Panyk, which that hadde tho

8640

Weddid his suster, prayd he specially

To brynge hom agein his children tuo

In honourable estaat al openly :

But oon thing he him prayde outerly,

That he to no wight, though men wold enquere,

Schuld not tellen whos children thay were,

But say the mayde schuld i-weddid be

Unto the markys of Saluce anoon.

And as this eorl was prayd, so dede he,

For at day set he on his way is goon

8650

Toward Saluce, and lordes many oon

In riche array, this mayden for to guyde,

Her yonge brother rydyng by hir syde.

Arrayed was toward hir mariage

This freisshe may al ful of gemmes clere,

Hir brother, which that seven yer was of age,

Arrayed eek ful freissh in his manere :

And thus in gret noblesse and with glad chere  
Toward Saluces schapyng her journey,  
Fro day to day thay ryden in her way. 8660

*Incipit pars quinta.*

Among al this, after his wikked usage,  
This marquis yit his wif to temple more  
To the uttrest proof of hir corrage,  
Fully to han experiens and lore,  
If that sche were as stedefast as byfore,  
Ilo on a day in open audience  
Ful boystrously hath sayd hir this sentence:

" Certes, Crisildes, I had y-nough plesance  
To have yow to my wif, for your goodnesse,  
And for youre trouthe, and for your obeissauce, 8670  
Nought for your lignage, ne for your richesse ;  
But now know I in verrey sothfastnesse,  
That in gret lordship, if I wol avyse,  
Ther is gret servitude in sondry wyse.

I may not do, as every ploughman may ;  
My poeple me constreignith for to take  
Another wyf, and cryen day by day ;  
And eek the popes ranconr for to slake  
Consentith it, that dar I undertake ;  
And trewely, thus make I wol yow say, 8680  
My nowe wif is comyng by the way.

" Be strong of hert, and voyde anon hir place,  
And thilke dower that ye broughten me

8674—*servitude*. "Nunc quoniam, ut videtur, magna annis fortuna  
servitus magna est, non mihi licet quasi villis liceret agricola," etc.  
The Harl. MS. reads *servis*, which is inconsistent with the metre.

Tak it agayn, I graunt it of my grace.  
Retourneth to your fadres hous," quod he,  
"No man may alway have prosperité.  
With even hert I rede yow endure  
The strok of fortune or of adventure."

And sche agayn answerd in pacience :  
"My lord," quod sche, "I wot, and wist alway, 8690  
How that betwixe your magnificence  
And my poverte no wight can ne may  
Make comparisoun, it is no nay ;  
I ne held me never digne in no manere  
To ben your wyf, ne yit your chamberere.

"And in this hous, ther ye me lady made,  
(The highe 'God take I for my witesse,  
And al so wisly he my soule glade)  
I never huld me lady ne maistresse, 8700  
But humble servaunt to your worthinesse,  
And ever schal, whil that my lyf may dure,  
Aboven every worldly creature.

"That ye so longe of your benignité  
Han holden me in honour and nobleye,  
Wher as I was not worthy for to be,  
That thonk I God and yow to whom I preye  
For yeld it yow, ther is no more to seye :  
Unto my fader gladly wil I wende,  
And with him duelle unto my lyves ende.

"Ther I was fostred as a child ful smal, 8710  
Til I be deed my lyf ther wil I lede,  
A widow clene in body, hert, and al.  
For sith I gaf to yow my maydenhede,  
And am your trewe wyf, it is no drede,

God schilde such a lordes wyf to take  
Another man to housbond or to make.

“ And of your newe wif, God of his grace  
So graunte yow welo and prosperite :  
For I wol gladly yelden hir my place,  
In which that I was blisful went to be. 8720  
For sith it liketh yow, my lord,” quod sche,  
“ That whilom were al myn hortes reste,  
That I schal gon, I wil go whan yow leste.

“ But ther as ye profre me such dowayre  
As I first brought, it is wel in my mynde,  
It were my wrecchid clothes, no thing faire,  
The whiche to me were hard now for to fynde.  
O goode God ! how gentil and how kynde  
Ye semed by your speche and your visage,  
That day that makod was our maringe ! 8730

“ But soth is sayd, algate I fynd it trewe,  
For in effect it proved is on me,  
Love is nought old, as whan that it is newe.  
But certes, lord, for noon adversite  
To deyen in the cans, it schal not be  
That ever in word or work I schal requete,  
That I yow gaf myn hert in hol entente.

“ My lord, ye wot, that in my sudres place  
Ye dede me strippe out of my pore wede,  
And richely me cladden of your grace ; 8740  
To yow brought I nought elles out of drede,  
But faith, and nakednesse, and maydenhede ;

8742—*nakednesse*. The Harl. MS. reads, erroneously, *worken*. The words of Petrarch are, “*neque omnino alia tulit dona tui, quam fides et nuditas.*”

And her agayn my clothyng I restore,  
And eek my weddyng ryng for evermore.

“The remenant of your jewels redy be  
Within your chambur dore dar I saufly sayn :  
Naked out of my fadres hous,” quod sche,  
“I com, and naked moot I torne agayn.  
Al your pleisauns wold I fulfille fayn :  
But yit I hope it be not youre entent,  
That I smocles out of your paleys went.

8750

Ye couthe not doon so dishonest a thing,  
That thilke wombe, in which your children leye,  
Schulde byforn the poeple, in my walkyng,  
Be seye al bare : wherfore I yow pray  
Let me not lik a worm go by the way :  
Remembre yow, myn oughne lord so deere,  
I was your wyf, though I unworthy were.

“Wherfor, in guerdoun of my maydenhede,  
Which that I brought and nought agayn I bere, 8760  
As vouchethsauf to geve me to my meede  
But such a smok as I was wont to were,  
That I therwith may wrye the wombe of here  
That was your wif : and here take I my leve  
Of yow, myn oughne lord, lest I yow greve.”

“The smok,” quod he, “that thou hast on thy bak,  
Let it be stille, and ber it forth with the.”  
But wel unnethes thilke word he spak,  
But went his way for routhe and for pité.  
Byforn the folk hirselves strippith sche, 8770  
And in hir smok, with heed and foot al bare,  
Toward hir fader house forth is sche faro.

The folk hir folwen wepyng in hir weye,  
 And fortune ay thay cursen as thay goon :  
 But sche fro wepyng kept hir oyen dreye,  
 Ne in this tyme word ne spak sche noon.  
 Hir fader, that this tyding herd anon,  
 Cursed the day and tyme, that nature  
 Schoop him to ben a lyves creature.

For out of doute this olde pore man 8780  
 Was ever in suspect of hir mariage :  
 For ever he deemed, sith that it bigan,  
 That whan the lord fulfilled had his corrage,  
 Him wolde think that it were disparage  
 To his estate, so lowe for to light,  
 And voyden hire as sone as ever he might.

Agayns his doughter hastily goth he ;  
 For he by noyse of folk knew hir comyng :  
 And with hir olde cote, as it might be,  
 He covered hir ful sorwfully wepyng : 8790  
 But on hir body might he it nought bringe,  
 For rude was the cloth, and mor of age  
 By dayes fole than at hir mariage.

Thus with hir fader for a certeyn space  
 Dwellith this flour of wisly pncience,  
 That neyther by her wordes no by hir face,  
 Byform the folk, nor oek in her absence,  
 Ne schewed sche that hir was doon offence,  
 Ne of hir highe astant no remembraunce  
 Ne hadde sche, as by hir countenance. 8800

No wonder is, for in hir gret estate  
 Hir gost was ever in playn humilite :

Ne tender mouth, noon herte delicate,  
 Ne pompe, ne semblant of realté ;  
 But ful of pacient benignité,  
 Discrete, and prideles, ay honourable,  
 And to hir housbond ever meke and stable.

Men speke of Job, and most for his humblesse,  
 As clerkes, whan hem lust, can wel endite,  
 Namely of men, but as in sothfastnesse, 8810  
 Though clerkes prayse wommen but a lite,  
 Ther can no man in humblesse him acqyute  
 As wommen can, ne can be half so trewe  
 As wommen ben, but it be falle of mewe.

*Pars sexta.*

Fro Boloyne is this erl of Panik y-come,  
 Of which the fame up-sprong to more and lasse,  
 And to the poeples eeres alle and some  
 Was couth eek, that a newe marquisesse  
 He with him brought, in such pomp and richesse,  
 That never was ther seyn with mannes ye 8820  
 So noble array in al West Lombardye.

The marquys, which that schoop and knew al this,  
 Er that this erl was come, sent his message  
 For thilk cely pore Grisildis ;  
 And sche with humble hert and glad visage,  
 Not with no swollen hert in hir corrage,  
 Cam at his hest, and on hir knees hir sette,  
 And reverently and wyfly sche him grette.

---

*Pars sexta.*—In the Harl. MS. this title of division is omitted, the Clerk's Tale being arranged in five parts only.

8825—*glad.* MS. Harl. reads *good.*



"Grisild." quod he, "my wil is outrely,  
 This mayden, that schal weddid be to me, 8830  
 Receyved be to morwe as really  
 As it possible is in myn hous to be :  
 And eek that every wight in his degre  
 Have his estant in sitting and servyse,  
 In high plesaunce, as I can devyse.

"I have no woman sullisant certeyne  
 The chaambres for tarray in ordinance  
 After my lust, and therfor wold I feyne,  
 That thin were al such maner governaunce :  
 Thow knowest eek of al my plesaunce ; 8840  
 Though thyn array be badde, and ille byseye,  
 Do thou thy dever atte leste weye."

"Nought oonly, lord, that I am glad," quod sche,  
 "To don your lust, but I desire also  
 Yow for to serve and plesse in my degre,  
 Withoute foyntyng, and schal evermo :  
 Ne never for no wele, ne for no wo,  
 Ne schal the goost withinne myn herte stente  
 To love yow best with al my trewe entent."

And with that word sche gan the hous to dight, 8850  
 And tables for to sette, and buddes make,  
 And peyned hir to doon al that sche might,  
 Preying the chamberers for Goddes sake  
 To hasten hem, and faste sweepen and schinke,  
 And sche the moste servisable of alle

8846—*foynthyng*. The Harl. MS. reads *foynnyng*, the *t* having been probably omitted by accident. The Latin text has, "*usque in hoc unquam fatigabor*."

Hath every chamber arrayed, and his halle.

Abouten undern gan this erl alight,  
That with him brought these noble children tweye ;  
For which the peple ran to se that sight  
Of her array, so richely biseye : 8860  
And than at erst amonges hem thay seye,  
That Walter was no fool, though that him lest  
To chaunge his wyf ; for it was for the best.

For sche is fairer, as thay demen alle,  
Than is Grisild, and more tender of age,  
And fairer fruyt bitwen hem schulde falle,  
And more plesaunt for hir high lynage :  
Hir brother eek so fair was of visage,  
That hem to seen the peple hath caught plesaunce,  
Comending now the marquys governaunce. 8870

O stormy poeple, unsad and ever untrewe,  
And undiscret, and chaungyng as a fane,  
Delytyng ever in rombel that is newe,  
For lik the moone ay wax ye and wane :  
Ay ful of clappyng, dere y-nough a jane,  
Youre doom is fals, your constaunce yvel previth,  
A ful gret fool is he that on yow leevith.

Thus sayde saad folk in that citee,  
Whan that the poeple gased up and down :  
For thay were glad right for the novelté, 8880  
To have a newe lady of her toun.

8867—*erl*. The Harl. MS. reads *lord*, but the reading here adopted from other MSS. is supported by the words of Petrarch ; “*Proxime lucis ore tertia, comes supervenerat.*”

8873—*delytyng*. The reading of MS. Harl. is *desynnyng*, which does not seem to afford so good a sense.

No more of this now make I mencion,  
 But to Grisildes agayn wol I me dresse,  
 And telle hir constance, and her busynesse.

Ful busy was Grisild in every thing,  
 That to the feste was appertinent;  
 Right nought was sche abaisht of hir clothing,  
 Though it were ruyde, and som del eek to-rent.  
 But with glad cheer to the gate is sche went,  
 With other folk, to griete the marquisesse, 8800  
 And after that doth forth her busynesse.

With so glad chier his gestes sche receyveth,  
 And so connyngly overich in his degre,  
 That no defaute no man apureyveth,  
 But ay thay wondren what scho mighte be,  
 That in so pover array was for to se,  
 And couthe such honour and reverence,  
 And worthily thay prayse hir prudence.

In all this mene while sche ne stent  
 This mayde and eek hir brother to comende 8900  
 With al hir hert in ful benigne entent,  
 So wel, that no man couthe hir pris amende:  
 But atte last whan that these lordes wende  
 To sitte doun to mete, he gan to calle  
 Grisild, as scho was busy in his halle.

"Grisyld," quod he, as it were in his play,  
 "How likith the my wif, and hir beaute?"  
 "Right wel, my lord," quod scho, "for in good fay.  
 A fairer saugh I never noon than scho.  
 I pray to God give hir prosperite; 8910

And so hope I, that he wol to yow sende  
Plesaunce y-nough unto your lyves ende.

“On thing warn I yow and biseke also,  
That ye ne prike with no tormentynge  
This tendre mayden, as ye have do mo :  
For sche is fostrid in hir norischinge  
More tendrely, and to my supposynge  
Sche couthe not adversité endure,  
As couthe a pore fostrid creature.”

And whan this Walter saugh hir pacience, 8920  
Hir glade cheer, and no malice at al,  
And he so oft had doon to hir offence,  
And sche ay sad and constant as a wal,  
Continuyng ever hir innocence over al,  
This sturdy marquys gan his herte dresse  
To rewen upon hir wyfly stedefastnesse.

“This is y-nough, Grisilde myn,” quod he,  
“Be now no more agast, ne yvel apayed.  
I have thy faith and thy benignité,  
As wel as ever womman was, assayed 8930  
In gret estate, and propreliche arrayed :  
Now knowe I, dere wyf, thy stedefastnesse ;”  
And hir in armes took, and gan hir kesse.

And sche for wonder took of it no keepe ;  
Sche herde not what thing he to hir sayde :  
Sche ferd as sche had stert out of a sleepe,  
Til sche out of hir masidnesse abrayde.

---

8915—*mo.* For *me*, to suit the rhyme. Tyrwhitt has pointed this out as one of the most remarkable licences that Chaucer has taken in altering the orthography of a word for this purpose.

"Grisild," quod he, "by God that for us deyde,  
 Thou art my wyf, no noon other I have,  
 No never had, as God my soule save. 8940

"This is my doughter, which thou hast supposed  
 To be my wif; that other faithfully  
 Schal be myn heir, as I have ny purposed:  
 Thow bar hem in thy body trowely:  
 At Boloyn have I kept hem prively:  
 Tak hem agayn, for now maistow not seye,  
 That thou hast lorn noon of thy children tweye.

"And folk, that other weyes han seyde of me,  
 I warn hem wel, that I have doon this deede  
 For no malice, no for no cruelte, 8950  
 But for tassaye in the thy wommanhode:  
 And not to slen my children, (God forbede!)  
 But for to kepe hem prively and stille,  
 Til I thy purpos kewe, and al thy will."

Whan scho this herd, aswoned down scho fallith  
 For pitous joy, and after hir swownyng  
 Sebe bothe hir yonge children to hir callith,  
 And in hir armes pitously wepyng  
 Embraseth hem, and tenderly kissyng,  
 Ful lik a moder with hir salte teris 8960  
 Scho bathis bothe hir visage and hir eeris.

O, such a pitous thing it was to see  
 Hir swownyng, and hir humble vois to here!  
 "Graunt mercy, lord, God thank it yow," quod scho,  
 "That ye han saved me my children deere."

8965.—In the Harl. MS. this line stands, *That ye han kept my children so deere*, but the reading given in the text and adopted by Tyrwhitt seems to me preferable.

Now rek I never to be deed right heere,  
Sith I stond in your love, and in your grace,  
No fors of deth, ne whan my spirit pace.

“O tender deere yonge children myne,  
Youre woful moder wende stedefastly, 8070  
That cruel houndes or som foul vermyne  
Had eten yow; but God of his mercy,  
And your benigne fader tenderly  
Hath doon yow kepe.” And in that same stounde  
Al sodeinly sche swapped down to grounde.

And in hir swough so sadly holdith sche  
Hir children tuo, whan sche gan hem tembrace,  
That with gret sleight and gret difficulté  
The children from her arm thay gonne arace.  
O! many a teer on many a pitous face 8080  
Doun ran of hem that stoden hir bisyde,  
Unnethe aboute hir mighte thay abyde.

Waltier hir gladith, and hir sorwe slakith,  
Sche rysith up abaisshed from hir traunce,  
And every wight hir joy and feste makith,  
Til sche hath caught agayn hir continuaunce.  
Wauter hir doth so faithfully plesaunce,  
That it was daynté for to see the cheere  
Bitwix hem tuo, now thay be met in feere.

These ladys, whan that thay her tyme say, 8090  
Han taken hir, and into chambre goon,  
And strippe hir out of hir rude array,  
And in a cloth of gold that brighte schon,  
With a coroun of many a riche stoon

Upon hir heed, thay into halle hir brought :  
And ther sche was honoured as hir ought.

Thus hath this pitous day a blisful ende ;  
For every man and womman doth his might  
This day in mirth and revel to despende,  
Til on the welken schon the sterres bright : 9000  
For more solempne in every mannes sight  
This feste was, and gretter of costage,  
Than was the revel of hir mariage.

Ful many a yer in heigh prosperité  
Lyven these tuo in concord and in rest,  
And richeliche his doughter married he  
Unto a lord, on of the worthiest  
Of al Ytaile, and thanne in pees and rest  
His wyves fader in his court he kepith,  
Til that the soule out of his body crespith. 9010

His sone succedith in his heritago,  
In rest and pees, after his fader day ;  
And fortunat was eek in mariage,  
Al put he not his wyf in gret assay.  
This world is not so strong, it is no nay,  
As it hath ben in olde tymes yore,  
And herknith, what this auctor saith therfore.

This story is sayd, not for that wyves scholde  
Folwe Grisild, as in humilité,  
For it were importable, though thay wolde ; 9020  
But for that every wight in his degré  
Schulde be constant in adversité,

---

9018—This and the next stanza are translated almost literally from Petrarch's Latin.

As was Grisild, therfore Petrark writeth  
This story, which with high stile he enditeth.

For swich a womman was so pacient  
Unto a mortal man, wel more us oughte  
Receyven al in gré that God us sent.  
For gret skil is he prove that he wroughte :  
But he ne temptith no man that he boughte,  
As saith seint Jame, if ye his pistil rede ; 9030  
He provith folk al day, it is no drede :

And suffrith us, as for our exercise,  
With scharpe scourges of adversité  
Ful ofte to be bete in sondry wise :  
Nought for to knowe oure wille, for certes he,  
Er we were born, knew al our frelté ;  
And for oure best is al his governaunce ;  
Leet us thanne lyve in vertuous suffraunce.

But oo word, lordes, herkneth er I go :  
It were ful hard to fynde now a dayes 9040  
As Grisildes in al a toun thre or tuo :  
For if that thay were put to such assayes,  
The gold of hem hath now so badde alayes  
With bras, that though the coyn be fair at ye,  
It wolde rather brest in tuo than plye.

For which heer, for the wyves love of Bathe,—  
Whos lyf and alle of hir secte God meyntene  
In high maistry, and elles were it scathe,—  
I wil with lusty herte freisch and grene,

---

9026—*For swich a womman, etc.*—i.e. Because such a woman was so patient, we ought the more, etc. The Lansd. MS. and others have *For sith a woman*, which may possibly be the correct reading.



Say yow a song to glade yow, I wone : 9050  
 And lat us stynt of ernestful matiere.  
 Herknith my song, that saith in this manere.

*L'envoye de Chaucer.*

Grisild is deed, and eek hir pacience,  
 And bothe at oones buried in Itayle :  
 For whiche I crye in open audience,  
 No weddid man so hardy be to assayle  
 His wyves pacience, in hope to fynde  
 Grisildes, for in certeyn he schal fayle.

O noble wyves, ful of heigh prudence,  
 Let noon humilité your tonges nayle : 9060  
 Ne lat no clerk have cause or diligence  
 To write of yow a story of such morvayle,  
 As of Grisildes pacient and kynde,  
 Lest Chichivacho yow swolwe in hir entrile.

9064—*Chichivache*. According to a popular fable, which seems to have had its origin in France, the *chichevache* or *chicheface*, was a monster which lived only on good women, and which was said to be always thin and meagre on account of the extreme rarity of this article of food. M. Achille Jubinal, in the notes to his *Mystères inédits du xv. siècle*, tom. i, p. 390, has printed a French poetical description of this animal from a manuscript of the fourteenth century. In the French miracle of St. Geneviève, of the fifteenth century, (Jubinal, ib. p. 281) a man says satirically to the saint,—

Gardez-vous de la *chicheface*,  
 El vous mordra s'el vous rencontre,  
 Vous n'amendez point sa besoigne.

I am not aware of any allusion to this fable in England before Chaucer; but our countrymen carried the satire still further, and added another beast named Bycorn, who lived upon good and patient husbands, and who was as fat as the other was lean, on account of the abundance of his favourite food. A poem by Lydgate on "Bycorn and Chichevache,"

Folwith ecco, that holdith no silence,  
 But ever answereth at the countre<sup>re</sup>tayle :  
 Beth nought bydaffed for your innocence,  
 But scharply tak on yow the governayle :  
 Empryntith wel this lessoun on your mynde,  
 For comun profyt, sith it may awayle. 9070

Ye archewyves, stondith at defens,  
 Syn ye ben strong, as is a greet chamayle,  
 Ne suffre not, that men yow don offens.  
 And sclendre wyves, felle as in batayle,  
 Beth egre as is a tyger yond in Inde ;  
 Ay clappith as a mylle, I yow counsaile.

Ne drede hem not, do hem no reverence,  
 For though thin housbond armed be in mayle,  
 The arwes of thy crabbid eloquence  
 Schal perse his brest, and eek his adventayle : 9080  
 In gelousy I rede eek thou him bynde,  
 And thou schalt make him couche as doth a quayle.

If thou be fair, ther folk ben in presence  
 Schew thou thy visage and thin apparaile ;  
 If thou be foul, be fre of thy despense,  
 To gete the frendes do ay thy travayle :  
 Be ay of chier as light as lef on lynde,  
 And let hem care, and wepe, and wryng, and wayle.

is printed in Mr. Halliwell's *Minor Poems of Dan John Lydgate*, p. 120. A large woodcut, printed in a broadside of the time of Elizabeth, and preserved in the collection of broadsides, &c. in the library of the Society of Antiquaries, gives a representation of these two monsters.

9074—*wyves*. The reading of the Harl. MS. is *wydwes*.

## THE PROLOGUE OF THE MARCHAUNDIS TALE.

" WEPYNG and wailyng, care and other sorwe  
 I knowe y-nough, bothe on even and on morwe," 9090  
 Quod the marchaund, " and so doon other mo,  
 That weddid ben ; I trowe that it be so :  
 For wel I woot it fareth so with me.  
 I have a wyf, the worste that may be,  
 For though the feend to hir y-coupled were,  
 Sche wold him overmacche I dar wel swore.  
 What schuld I yow reherse in special  
 Hir high malice ? sche is a schrewe at al.  
 Ther is a long and a large difference  
 Betwix Grisildes grete pacience, 9100  
 And of my wyf the passyng cruelté.  
 Were I unbounden, al so mot I the,  
 I wolde never eft come in the snare.  
 We weddid men lyve in sorwe and care,  
 Assay it who so wil, and he schal fynde  
 That I say soth, by scint Thomas of Inde.  
 As for the more part, I say not alle ;

*The prologue.* This prologue is omitted in some MSS., and in others a different prologue is given, and the Clerkes Tale is in some followed by the Frankleins Tale. The prologue and arrangement of the Harl. MS. are, however, evidently the genuine ones. Tyrwhitt quotes from other MSS. the following concluding stanza to the *envoye* :—

This worthy clerk whan ended was his tale,  
 Our hoste saide and swore by cockes bones,  
 Me were lever than a barrel of ale  
 My wif at home had herd this legend ones :  
 This is a gentil tale for the nones,  
 As to my purpos, wiste ye my wille,  
 But thing that wol not be, let it be stille.

God schilde that it scholde so byfalle.  
 A! good sir host, I have y-weddid be  
 Thise monethes tuo, and more not, pardé ; 9110  
 And yit I trowe that he, that al his lyve  
 Wyfles hath ben, though that men wold him rive  
 Unto the hert, ne couthe in no manere  
 Tellen so moche sorwe, as I now heere  
 Couthe telle of my wyfes cursednesse."  
 "Now," quod our ost, "Marchaunt, so God yow blesse !  
 Sin ye so moche knowen of that art,  
 Ful hertily tellith us a part."  
 "Gladly," quod he, "but of myn oughne sore  
 For sory hert I telle may na more." 9120

## THE MARCHAUNDES TALE.

WHILOM ther was dwellyng in Lombardy  
 A worthy knight, that born was of Pavy,  
 In which he lyved in gret prosperité ;  
 And fourty yer a wifes man was he,  
 And folwed ay his bodily delyt  
 On wommen, ther as was his appetyt,  
 As doon these fooles that ben seculere.  
 And whan that he was passed sixty yere,

---

*The Marchaundes Tale.* The French fabliau, from which this Tale was no doubt translated, is not now known to exist, but the subject has been preserved in Latin in the metrical tales of Adolfus, printed in my *Latin Stories*, p. 174, of which collection it forms the first tale. It is told also in a Latin prose tale given in my *Latin Stories*, p. 78, from the Appendix to the editions of *Æsop's Fables* printed in the fifteenth century.

9128—*sixty*. The Harl. MS. reads here as in l. 9124, *fourty*. Tyrwhitt reads in both places *sixty*. The Lansdowne MS. has *xl* in the first place, and *lx* in the second, which numbers I have thought it safest

Were it for holyness or for dotage,  
 I can not say, but such a gret corrago 9130  
 Hadde this knight to ben a weddid man,  
 That day and night he doth al that he can  
 Taspye wher that he mighte weddid be ;  
 Praying our lord to graunte him, that he  
 Might oones knowen of that blisful lif,  
 That is bitwix an housbond and his wyf,  
 And for to lyve under that holy bond,  
 With which God first man to womman bond.  
 "Noon other lif," sayd he, "is worth a bene :  
 For wedlok is so holy and so clene, 9140  
 That in this world it is a paradis."  
 Thus sayd this olde knight, that was so wys.  
 And certainly, as soth as God is king,  
 To take a wyf is a glorious thing,  
 And namely whan a man is old and hoor,  
 Than is a wyf the fruyt of his tresor ;  
 Than schuld he take a yong wif and a fair,  
 On which he might engendro him'an hair,  
 And lede his lyf in mirthe and solace,  
 Wheras these bachileres syngo allas, 9160  
 Whan that thay fynde eny adversité  
 In love, which is but childes vanité.  
 And trewely it sit wel to be so,

---

to adopt: the transposition of *l* and *w* easily gave rise to different readings. I suppose that Chaucer meant to reckon the period during which his hero remained "wifles" from the ordinary period of marriage, or about his twentieth year. The reading of MS. Harl., in l. 9124, is totally incompatible with the old age and impotency under which January is described as labouring.

That bachilers have ofte peyne and wo :  
 On brutil ground thay bulde, and brutelnesse  
 Thay fynde, whan thay wene sikernesse :  
 Thay lyve but as a brid other as a best,  
 In liberté and under noon arrest ;  
 Ther as a weddid man, in his estate,  
 Lyvith his lif busily and ordinate, 9160  
 Under the yok of mariage i-bounde :  
 Wel may his herte in joye and blisse abounde.  
 For who can be so buxom as a wyf ?  
 Who is so trewe and eek so ententyf  
 To kepe him, seek and hool, as is his make ?  
 For wele or woo sche wol him not forsake :  
 Sche is not wery him to love and serve,  
 Theigh that he lay bedred til that he sterve.  
 And yet som clerkes seyn, it is not so,  
 Of whiche Theofrast is oon of tho : 9170  
 What fors though Theofrast liste lye ?  
 Ne take no wif, quod he, for housbondrye,  
 As for to spare in houshold thy dispense :  
 A trewe servaunt doth more diligence  
 Thy good to kepe, than thin oughne wif,  
 For sche wol clayme half part in al hir lif.

---

9160—*busily*. The MS. Lansdowne has *blisful*, which is the reading adopted by Tyrwhitt.

9172—*Ne take no wif*. "What follows to ver. 9180 incl. is taken from the *Liber aureolus Theophrasti de nuptiis*, as quoted by Hieronymus *contra Jovinianum*, and from thence by John of Salisbury, *Polycrat.* l. viii. c. xi. *Quod si propter dispensationem domus, et languoris solatia, et fugam solitudinis, ducuntur uxores, multo melius dispensat servus fidelis, &c. Assidere autem ægrotanti magis possunt amici et vernulæ beneficiis obligati quam illa quæ nobis impulet lachrymas suas," &c — Tyrwhitt.*

And if that thou be seek, so God me save,  
 Thyne verray frendes or a trowe knave  
 Wol kepe the bet than sche that waytith ay  
 After thy good, and hath doon many a day. 9180  
 And if that thou take a wif, be war  
 Of oon peril, which declare I no dar.

This entent, and an hundrid sithe wors,  
 Writith this man, ther God his bones curs.  
 But take no keep of al such vanité;  
 Deffy Theofrast, and herkne me.  
 A wyf is Goddes gifte verrayly;  
 Al other maner giftes hardily,  
 As landes, rentes, pasturo, or comune,  
 Or other moeblis, ben giftes of fortune,  
 That passen as a schadow on a wul:  
 But dred not, if I playuly telle schul, 9190

9181—*And if that.* This and the following line are not in the Text of Tyrwhitt, who observes on this passage,—“After this verse in the common Editt. are these two,

And if thou take to the a wif untrue  
 Ful oftentime it shall the sore rew.”

In MSS. A C. and B. a. they stand thus—

And if thou take a wif be wel ywar  
 Of on <sup>peril</sup> thing which I declare ne dare.

In MSS. C. 1. HIA. D. thus—

And if thou take a wif of hore lynage  
 She shal be hauteyn of gret costage.

In MS. B. d. thus—

And if thou take a wif in thin age olde  
 Ful lightly mayest thou be a cokewold.

In MSS. Ask. 1. 2. E. H. B. 9. N. c. and both Caxton's Editt. they are entirely omitted, and so I believe they should be. If any one of these couplets should be allowed to be from the hand of Chaucer, it can only be considered as the opening of a new argument, which the author, for some reason or other, immediately abandoned, and consequently would have cancelled, if he had lived to publish his work.”

A wyf wil last and in thin hous endure,  
 Wel lenger than the lust peradventure.  
 Mariage is a ful gret sacrament;  
 He which hath no wif I hold him schent;  
 He lyveth helples, and is al desolate:  
 (I speke of folk in secular estate):  
 And herken why, I say not this for nought,  
 That womman is for mannes help i-wrought.  
 The heighe God, whan he had Adam maked,  
 And saugh him al aloone body naked, 9200  
 God of his grete goodnes sayde thanne,  
 Let us now make an helpe to this manne  
 Lyk to himself; and than he made Eve.  
 Her may ye see, and here may ye preve,  
 That wyf is mannes help and his comfort,  
 His paradys terrestre and his desport:  
 So buxom and so vertuous is sche,  
 Thay mosten neede lyve in unité:  
 O fleisch thay ben, and on blood, as I gesse,  
 Have but oon hert in wele and in distresse. 9210

A wyf? a! seinte Mary, *benedicite*,  
 How might a man have eny adversité  
 That hath a wyf? certes I can not say.  
 The joye that is betwixen hem tway  
 Ther may no tonge telle or herte think.  
 If he be pore, sche helpith him to swynk;  
 Sche kepith his good, and wastith never a del;  
 And al that her housbond list, sche likith it wel;

---

9200—*body naked*. Tyrwhitt reads from other MSS. *belly naked*, which was the ordinary phrase for entirely naked. MS. Lansd. has *bly naked*, which is probably a mere error for *belly naked*.



Sche saith nought oones nay, whan he saith ye ;  
Do this, saith he ; al rody, sir, saith sche. 9220

O blisful ordre, o wedlok precious !  
Thou art so mery, and ek so vertuous,  
And so comendid, and approved eek,  
That every man that holt him worth a leek.  
Upon his bare knees ought al his lyf  
Thanken his God, that him hath sent a wil,  
Or pray to God oon him for to sende  
To be with him unto his lyves ende.  
For than his lyf is set in sikernesse :  
He may not be deceyved, as I gesse, 9230  
So that he worche after his wyfes reid ;  
Than may he boldely bere up his heed.  
Thay ben so trewe, and also so wyse.  
For whiche, if thou wolt do as the wyse,  
Do alway so, as womman wol the rede.  
Lo how that Jacob, as the clerkes rede,  
By good counseil of his moder Rebecke,  
Band the kydes skyn about his nekke ;  
For which his fader benesoun he wan.  
Lo Judith, as the story telle can, 9240  
By wys counseil sche Goddes poepel kept,  
And slough him Oliphernus whil he slept.

Lo Abygaille, by good counseil how sche  
Savyd hir housbond Nabal, whan that he

9244—*Nabal*. The Harl. MS. reads *Nacab*, which appears to be a mere error of the scribe.

9245—*Hester*. The Harl. MS. and some others read *after also*, an evident error of the scribe. In l. 9247 the Harl. MS. reads corruptly *Mandoche*. The proper names are often corrupted in this manner by the ignorance or carelessness of scribes, in manuscripts of early English poetry.

Schold han ben slayn. And loke, Hester also  
 By good counseil delivered out of wo  
 The poeple of God, and made him Mardoché  
 Of Assuere enhaunsed for to be.

Ther nys no thing in gré superlatif  
 (As saith Senec) above an humble wyf. 9250  
 Suffre thy wyves tonge, as Catoun byt,  
 Sche schal comaunde, and thou schalt suffre it,  
 And yit sche wil obeye of curtesye.

A wif is keper of thin housbondrye :  
 Wel may the sike man wayle and wepe,  
 Ther as ther is no wyf the hous to kepe.  
 I warne the, if wisly thou wilt wirche,  
 Love wel thy wyf, as Crist loveth his chirche :  
 If thou lovest thiself, thou lovest thy wyf.  
 No man hatith his fleissch, but in his lif 9260  
 He fostrith it, and therfore warne I the  
 Cherissh thy wyf, or thou schalt never the.  
 Housbond and wif, what so men jape or pleye,  
 Of worldly folk holden the righte weye :  
 Thay ben so knyht, ther may noon harm bytyde,  
 And nameliche upon the wyves syde.  
 For which this January, of which I tolde,

---

9250—*As seith Senec.* The passage of Seneca alluded to, was written in the margin of one of the MSS. consulted by Tyrwhitt: "*Sicut nihil est superius benigna conjuge, ita nihil est crudelius infesta muliere.*"

9251—*as Catoun byt.* The allusion is to the popular treatise entitled *Cato de Moribus*, lib. iii, distich 25:—

"*Uxoris linguam, si frugi est, ferre memento.*"

9258—*Love wel, etc.* The allusion is to *Paul's Epist. to the Ephesians*, v. 25, 28, 29, *virī diligite uxores vestras, sicut et Christus dilexit ecclesiam. . . . Qui suam uxorem diligit, seipsum diligit. Nemo enim unquam carnem suam odio habuit; sed nutrit et fovit eam.*

Considered hath inwith his dayes olde  
The lusty lif, the vertuous quiete,  
That is in mariage honey-swete.

0270

And for his frendes on a day he sent  
To tellen hem theeffect of his entent.  
With face sad, he hath hem this tale told :  
He sayde, "Frendes, I am hoor and old,  
And almost (God woot) at my pittes brinke,  
Upon my soule som what most I thynke.  
I have my body folily dispendid,  
Blessed be God that it schal be amendid :  
For I wil be certeyn a weddid man,  
And that anon in al the hast I can,  
Unto som mayde, fair and tender of age :  
I pray yow helpith for my mariage  
Al sodeynly, for I wil not abyde :  
And I wil fonde tespien on my syde,  
To whom I may be weddid hastily.  
But for als moche as ye bon mo than I,  
Ye schul rather such a thing asprien  
Than I, and wher me lust beste to allien.  
But oo thing warne I yow, my frendes deere,  
I wol noon old wyf have in no manere :  
Sche schal not passe sixtene yer certayn.  
Old fisch and yong floisch that wold I have ful fuyne.  
Bet is," quod he, "a pyk than a pikerell,  
And bet than olde boef is the tendre vel.  
I wil no womman twenty yer of age,  
It nys but bene-straw and gret forage.  
And eek these olde wydewes (God it woot)

0280

0290

They can so moche craft of Wades boot,  
 So moche broken harm whan that hem list,  
 That with hem schuld I never lyven in rest. 9300  
 For sondry scolis maken subtil clerkes ;  
 Womman of many a scole half a clerk is.  
 But certeyn, a yong thing may men gye,  
 Right as men may warm wax with hondes plye.  
 Wherfor I say yow plenerly in a clause,  
 I wil noon old wyf han right for that cause.  
 For if so were I hadde so meschaunce,  
 That I in hir ne couthe have no plesaunce,  
 Than schuld I lede my lyf in advourtrie,  
 And go streight to the devel whan I dye. 9310  
 Ne children schuld I noon upon hir geten :  
 Yet were me lever houndes had me eten,  
 Than that myn heritage schulde falle  
 In straunge hond : and thus I telle yow alle.  
 I doute not, I wot the cause why  
 Men scholde wedde : and forthermor woot I,  
 Ther spokith many man of mariage,  
 'That wot nomore of it than wot my page,

---

9298—*of Wades boot.* The popular legend of Wade's boat, though well known in the sixteenth century, is now unfortunately lost, so that we cannot fully understand the force of Chaucer's allusion. Wade was one of the heroes of the Northern Mythology, and like so many of the same class, became subsequently the hero of a medieval romance of the same class as the romances of Horn and Havelok. M. Fr. Michel has collected together nearly all the passages of old writers that can now be found, in which he is mentioned, in an essay in French, *sur Wade*. The medieval romance appears to have related a long series of wild adventures which Wade encountered in his boat, named Guingelot; and these adventures seem to be cited in the text as examples of craft and cunning: in another passage of Chaucer, Troilus, lib. iii. l. 616, they are spoken of as examples of romantic or idle tales,—

"He songe, scho pleyede, he tolde a tale of Wade."

9302—*scole.* The Harl. MS. reads *skile*.

For whiche causes man schuld take a wyf.

If he ne may not chast be by his lif,

9320

Take him a wif with gret devocioun,

Bycause of lawful procreacioun

Of children, to thonour of God above,

And not oonly for paramour and for love ;

And for thay schulde leccherye eschiewe,

And yeld oure dettes whan that it is due :

Or for that ilk man schulde helpen other

In meschief, as a suster schal the brother,

And lyve in chastité ful holily.

But, sires, by your levo, that am not I,

9330

For God be thanked, I dar make avaunt,

I fele my lemys stark and suffisaunt

To doon al that a man bilongeth unto :

I wot my selve best what I may do.

“ Though I be hoor, I fare as doth a tree,

That blossemith er that the fruyt i-waxe be ;

A blossemy tre is neither drye no deed :

I fele me no wher hoor but on myn heed.

Myn herte and al my lymes ben as greene,

As laurer thurgh the yeer is for to seene.

9340

And synnes ye han herd al myn ontont,

I pray yow to my wille ye assent.”

Diverse men diversly him tolde

Of mariage many ensamples olde ;

Some blamed it, some praised it certayn ;

But atte laste, schortly for to sayn,

(As alday fallith altercacioun,

Bitwixe frendes in dispitesoun)

Ther fel a strif bitwen his bretheren tuo,  
 Of which that oon was clepid Placebo, 9350  
 Justinus sothly cleped was that other.  
 Placebo sayde: " O January, brother,  
 Ful litel need had ye, my lord so deere,  
 Counseil to axe of eny that is heere :  
 But that ye ben so ful of sapience,  
 That yow ne likith for your heigh prudence,  
 To wayve fro the word of Salamon.  
 This word, said he, unto us everychoon :  
 Werk al thing by counsail, thus sayd he,  
 And thanne schaltow nought repente the. 9360  
 But though that Salamon speke such a word,  
 Myn owne deere brother and my lord,  
 So wisly God bring my soule at rest,  
 I holde your oughne counseil is the best.  
 For, brother myn, of me tak this motif,  
 I have now ben a court-man al my lyf.  
 And God wot, though that I unworthy be,  
 I have standen in ful gret degré  
 Abouten lordes in ful high estat :  
 Yit had I never with noon of hem debaat, 9370  
 I never hem contraxied trewely.  
 I wot wel that my lord can more than I ;  
 What that he saith, I hold it ferm and stable,  
 I say the same, or elles thing semblable.  
 A ful gret fool is eny counselour,

---

9363—at rest. The Harl. MS. reads *at ese and rest*, which makes the line too long. The word *ese* has probably crept in as a gloss upon *rest*, or as a various reading.

That servith any lord of high honour,  
That dar presume, or oones thenken it,  
That his counseil schuld passe his lordes wit.  
Nay, lordes ben no fooles by my fay.  
Ye have your self y-spoken heer to day 9380  
So heigh sentens, so holly, and so wel,  
That I consente, and conferme every del  
Youre wordes alle, and youre oppinioun.  
By God, ther is no man in al this toun  
Ne in Ytaile, couthe better have sayd:  
Crist holdith him of this ful wel apayd.  
And trewely it is an heigh corrage  
Of any man that stopen is in age,  
To take a yong wyf, by my fader kyn :  
Your herte hongith on a joly pyn. 9390  
Doth now in this matier right as yow lest,  
For fynally I hold it for the best."  
Justinus, that ay stille sat and herde,  
Right in this wise he to Placebo answerde.  
"Now, brother myn, be pacient I yow pray,  
Syns ye have sayd, and herknith what I say :  
Senek amonges other wordes wyse  
Saith, that a man aught him wel avyse,  
To whom he giveth his lond or his catel.  
And syns I aught avyse me right wel, 9400  
To whom I give my good away fro me,  
Wel more I aught avised for to be  
To whom I give my body : for alwey  
I warn yow wel it is no childes play  
To take a wyf withoute avisement.

Men most enquire (this is myn assent)  
Wher sche be wys, or sobre, or dronkelewe,  
Or proud, or eny other way a schrewe,  
A chyder, or a wastour of thy good,  
Or riche or pore, or elles man is wood. 9410  
Al be it so, that no man fynde schal  
Noon in this world, that trottith hool in al,  
Neyther man, ne best, such as men can devyse,  
But natheles it aught y-nough suffice  
With any wyf, if so were that sche hadde  
Mo goode thewes than hir vices badde :  
And al this askith leyser to enquire.  
For God woot, I have weped many a tere  
Ful prively, syns I have had a wyf.  
Prayse who so wil a weddid mannes lif, 9420  
Certes I fynd in it but cost and care,  
And observaunce of alle blisses bare.  
And yit, God woot, myn neighebour aboute,  
And namely of wommen many a route,  
Sayn that I have the moste stedefast wyf,  
And eek the meekest oon that berith lyf.  
But I woot best, wher wryngith me my scho.  
Ye may for me right as yow liste do.  
Avysith yow, ye ben a man of age,  
How that ye entren into mariage ; 9430  
And namly with a yong wif and a fair.  
By him that made water, eorthe, and air,  
The yongest man, that is in al this route,



Is busy y-nough to bring it wel aboute  
 To have his wif alloone, trustith me :  
 Ye schul not please hir fully yeres thre,  
 This is to say, to doon hir ful plesaunce.  
 A wyf axith ful many an observaunce.  
 I pray yow that ye be not evel apayd."

" Wel," quod this January, "and hastow sayd? 9140

Straw for thy Senec, and for thy proverbis !  
 I counte nought a panyer ful of herbes  
 Of scole termes ; wiser men than thow,  
 As I have sayd, assenten her right now  
 Unto my purpose : Placebo, what say yo ?"

" I say it is a cursed man," quod he,

" That lettith matrimoigne sicurly."

And with that word thay rysen up sodeinly,  
 And ben assented fully, that he scholdo  
 Be weddid whan him lust, and wher he wolde. 9150

The fantasy and the curious busynesse  
 Fro day to day gan in the soule impresso  
 Of January aboute his mariage.  
 Many a fair schap, and many a fair visage,  
 Ther passith thorough his herte night by night.  
 As who so took a mirroure polissched bright,  
 And set it in a comun market place,  
 Than schuld he so many a figure paco  
 By his mirroure ; and in the same wise  
 Gan January in his thought devyso 9160  
 Of maydens, which that dwellid him bisyde :  
 He wist not where that he might abyde.  
 For though that oon have beaute in hir face,

Another stant so in the poeples grace  
 For hir sadness and hir benignité,  
 That of the poeple grettest vois hath sche:  
 And som were riche and hadde badde name.  
 But natheles, bitwix ernest and game,  
 He atte last appoynted him an oon,  
 And let al other fro his herte goon, 9470  
 And ches hir of his oughne auctorité,  
 For love is blynd al day, and may not se.  
 And whan he was into bedde brought,  
 He purtrayed in his hert and in his thought  
 Hir freische beauté, and hir age tendre,  
 Hir myddel smal, hir armes long and sclendre,  
 Hir wise governaunce, hir gentillesse,  
 Hir wommanly beryng, and hir sadnesse.

And whan that he on hir was condescendid,  
 Him thought his choys mighte nought be amendid; 9480  
 For whan that he himself concludid hadde,  
 Him thought ech other mannes witte so badde,  
 That impossible it were to repplie  
 Agayn his choys; this was his fantasie.  
 His frendes sent he to, at his instance,  
 And prayed hem to doon him that plesaunce,  
 That hastily thay wolde to him come;  
 He wold abrigge her labour alle and some:  
 Nedith no more for him to gon ne ryde,  
 He was appoynted ther he wold abyde. 9490  
 Placebo cam, and eek his frendes soone,

---

9482—*witte*. This is the reading of Lansd. MS. The Harl. MS. reads *wyf*, which appears to be incorrect.

And althirfirst he bad hem alle a boone,  
 That noon of hem noon argumentis make  
 Agayn the purpos which that he had take :  
 Which purpos was plesant to God, sayd he,  
 And verray ground of his prosperité.

He sayd, ther was a mayden in the toun,  
 Which that of beauté hadde gret renoun,  
 Al were it so, sche were of smal degré,  
 Suffisith him hir youthe and hir beauté: 9500  
 Which mayde, he sayd, he wold have to his wyf,  
 To lede in ease and holinesse his lyf:  
 And thanked God, that he might have hir al,  
 That no wight with his blisse parten schal :  
 And prayed hem to laboure in this neede,  
 And schapen that he faile not to speedo.  
 For than, he sayd, his spirit was at easo ;  
 " Than is," quod he, " no thing may me displeuse,  
 Save oon thing prikkith in my conscience,  
 The which I wil reherse in your presence. 9510  
 I have herd sayd," quod he, " ful yore ago,  
 Ther may no man have parfyt blisses tuo,  
 This is to say, in erthe and eek in hevone.  
 For though he kepe him fro the synnes seveno,  
 And eek from ylk a braunche of thilke tre,  
 Yit is ther so parfyt felicite  
 And so gret easo and lust in mariago,  
 That ever I am agast now in myn ago,

---

9500. *youthe*.—This reading also is adopted from the Lansdowne MS., as being apparently better than that of the Harl. MS., which has *trouth*.

9515. *braunche*.—The popular medieval treatises on the seven sins, arrange the minor transgressions connected with each as *branches* of the primary tree.

That I schal lede now so mery a lyf,  
So delicat, withoute wo and stryf, 9520  
That I schal have myn heven in erthe heere.  
For sith that verrey heven is bought so deere  
With tribulacioun and gret penaunce,  
How schuld I thanne, that live in such plesaunce  
As alle weddid men doon with her wyves,  
Come to blisse ther Crist eterne on lyve is?  
This is my drede, and ye, my bretheren tweye,  
Assoilith me this questioun, I yow preye."

Justinus, which that hated his folye,  
Answerd anon right in his japerie ; 9530  
And for he wold his longe tale abrigge,  
He wolde noon auctorité alegge,  
But sayde, " Sir, so ther be noon obstacle  
Other than this, God of his high miracle,  
And of his mercy may so for yow wirche,  
That er ye have your rightes of holy chirche,  
Ye may repente of weddid mannes lyf,  
In which ye sayn ther is no wo ne stryf:  
And ellis God forbede, but he sente  
A weddid man grace him to repente 9540  
Wel ofte, rather than a sengle man.  
And therfor, sire, the beste reed I can,  
Dispaire yow nought, but have in youre memorie,  
Peradventure sche may be your purgatorie ;  
Sche may be Goddes mene and Goddes whippe ;  
Than schal your soule up to heven skippe  
Swyfter than doth an arwe out of a bowe.  
I hope to God herafter ye shuln knowe,

That ther nys noon so gret felicité  
 In mariage, ne nevermor schal be, 9550  
 That yow schal lette of your savacioun,  
 So that ye use, as skile is and resoun,  
 The lustes of your wyf attemperely,  
 And that ye please hir not to amorously :  
 And that ye kepe yow eek from other synne.  
 My tale is doon, for my witt is thynne.  
 Beth not agast herof, my brother deero,  
 But let us waden out of this matiero.  
 The wif of Bathe, if ye han understonde,  
 Of mariage, which ye han now in honde, 9560  
 Declared hath ful wel in litel space :  
 Fareth now well, God have yow in his grace."

And with that word this Justinus and his brother  
 Han take her leve, and ech of hom of other.  
 And whan thay saugh that it most needis be,  
 Thay wroughten so by sleight and wys trote,  
 That sche this mayden, which that Mayus hight,  
 As hastily as ever that sche might,  
 Schal weddid be unto this Januarie.  
 I trow it were to longe yow to tarie, 9570  
 If I yow tolde of every scrit and bond,  
 By which that scho was feoffed in his lond ;  
 Or for to herkon of hir richo army.  
 But finally y-comen is that day,  
 That to the chircho bothe ben thay went,  
 For to receyve the holy sacrament.

Forth comth the preost, with stoole about his necke,  
 And bad hir be lik Sarra and Rebecke  
 In wisdom and in trouth of mariage :  
 And sayd his orisouns, as is usage, 9580  
 And crouched hem, and bad God schuld hem blesse,  
 And made al secur y-nowh with holinesse.

Thus ben thay weddid with solempnité ;  
 And atte fest sittith he and sche  
 With othir worthy folk upon the deys.  
 Al ful of joy and blis is the paleys,  
 And ful of instrumentz, and of vitaille,  
 The moste deintevous of al Ytaile.  
 Biforn hem stood such instruments of soun,  
 That Orpheus, ne of Thebes Amphioun, 9590  
 Ne maden never such a melodye.  
 At every cours ther cam loud menstralceye,  
 That never tromped Joab for to heere,  
 Ne he Theodomas yit half so cleere  
 At Thebes, whan the cité was in doute.  
 Bachus the wyn hem schenchith al aboute,  
 And Venus laughith upon every wight,  
 (For January was bycome hir knight,  
 And wolde bothe assayen his corrage  
 In liberté and eek in mariage) 9600  
 And with hir fuyrbrond in hir hond aboute

---

9594—*Ne he Theodomas*. "This person is mentioned again as a famous trumpeter in the H. of F. iii. 156, but upon what authority I really do not know. I should suspect that our author met with him, and the anecdote alluded to, in some *Romantic History* of Thebes. *He* is prefixed to proper names emphatically, according to the Saxon usage. See before ver. 9242, *him* Holofernes; ver. 9247, *him* Mardochee; and below ver. 9608. Of *hirs* Philologie and *him* Mercury."—*Tyrwhitt*.

Daunceth bifore the bryde and al the route.  
 And certeynly I dar right wel say this,  
 Ymeneus, that god of weddyng is,  
 Seigh never his lif so mery a weddid man.  
 Holdé thy pees, thow poete Marcian,  
 That writest us that ilke weddyng merye  
 Of hir Philologie and he Mercurie,  
 And of the songes that the Muses songe :  
 To smal is bothe thy penne and eek thy tonge 9610  
 For to describe of this mariage.  
 Whan tender youthe hath weddid stoupyng ago,  
 Ther is such mirthe that it may not be write ;  
 Assaieth it your self, than may ye wyte  
 If that I lye or noon in this mateere.  
 Mayus, that sit with so benigne a cheere,  
 Hir to bihold it semed fayerye ;  
 Queen Ester loked never with such an ye  
 On Assuere, so meke a look hath scho ;  
 I may not yow devyse al hir beauté ; 9620  
 But thus moche of hir beauté telle I may,  
 That sche was lyk the brighte morw of May,  
 Fulfild of alle beauté and plesaunce.

This January is ravyscht in a traunce,  
 At every tyme he lokith in hir face,  
 But in his hert he gan hir to manace,  
 That he that night in armes wold hir stroyne  
 Harder than ever Paris did Eloyne.

---

9606—*Marcian*. Marcianus Capella, the well-known author of a kind of philosophical romance, *De Nuptiis Mercurii et Philologie*.

9608—*he Mercuris*. Tyrwhitt reads *him*. See his observations in the note on l. 9594. I have not ventured to alter the reading of the Harl. MS., where it involves a question of grammatical construction.

But natheles yit had he gret pité  
 That thilke night offenden hir most he, 9630  
 And thought: "Alas! o tendre creature,  
 Now wolde God ye mighte wel endure  
 Al my corrage, it is so scharp and keene;  
 I am agast ye schul it not susteene.  
 For God forbede, that I dede al my might.  
 Now wolde God that it were woxe night,  
 And that the night wold stonden evermo.  
 I wold that al this poeple were ago."  
 And fynally he doth al his labour,  
 As he best mighte, savyng his honour, 9640  
 To hast hem from the mete in subtil wise.

The tyme cam that resoun was to ryse,  
 And after that men daunce, and drynke fast,  
 And spices al about the hous thay cast,  
 And ful of joy and blis is every man,  
 Al but a squier, that hight Damyan,  
 Which karf to-for the knight ful many a day:  
 He was so ravyssht on his lady May,  
 That for the verray payne he was nigh wood;  
 Almost he swelt and swowned ther he stood: 9650  
 So sore hath Venus hurt him with hir brond,  
 As that sche bare it daunsyng in hir hond.  
 And to his bed he went him hastily;  
 No more of him as at this tyme telle I;  
 But ther I lete him now his wo compleyne,

---

9637—*stonden*. Other MSS. read *lasten*.

9655—*now his wo compleyne*. MS. Lansd., with others, reads, *let him wepe y-nowe and pleine*.



Til freisshe May wol rewen on his peyne.  
 O perilous fuyr, that in the bed-straw bredith !  
 O famuler fo, that his service bedith !  
 O servaunt traitour, false homly howe,  
 Lyk to the nedder in bosom sleighe untrewe, 9660  
 God schild us alle from your acquaintance !  
 O January, dronken in plesaunce  
 Of mariage, se how thy Damyan,  
 Thyn oughne squier and thy borne man,  
 Entendith for to do the vilonye :  
 God graunte the thin homly fo espye.  
 For in this world nys worsse postilonce,  
 Than homly foo, alday in thy presence.  
 Parfourmed hath the sonne his ark diourne,  
 No lenger may the body of him sojourn 9670  
 On thorisonte, as in that latitude :  
 Night with his mantel, that is dork and rude,  
 Gan oversprede thomesperic aboute :  
 For which departed is the lusti route  
 Fro January, with thank on every side.  
 Hoom to her houses lustily thay ryde,

---

9659—*homly*. *Homly* of course means domestic: *hewe* is the Anglo-Saxon *hine*, a household servant. O false domestic servant! This reading of our MS. is undoubtedly the right one. Other MSS. have *holy* instead of *homly*, an error perhaps arising from the omission of the mark of abbreviation by some scribe who copied the word when it was written *holy*. Tyrwhitt however adopts this reading, mistakes the meaning of the word *hewe*, and, to make sense of the passage, adds *of*, which is found in none of the MSS.; and in his text it stands, *false of holy hewe*, which he supposes to signify false of holy colour. Conjectural emendations are always dangerous.

9660—*sleythe*. I have added this word from the MS. Lansdowne, as the line seems imperfect without it.

Wher as thay doon her thinges, as hem leste,  
 And whan thay seigh her tyme thay goon to reste.  
 Soone after that this hasty Januarie  
 Wold go to bed, he wold no lenger tarie. 9680  
 He drinkith ypocras, clarré, and vernage  
 Of spices hote, to encrese his corrage :  
 And many a letuary had he ful fyn,  
 Such as the cursed monk daun Constantin  
 Hath writen in his book *de Coitu* ;  
 To ete hem alle he wold no thing eschieu :  
 And to his privé frendes thus sayd he :  
 " For Goddes love, as soone as it may be, 9690  
 Let voyden al this hous in curteys wise."  
 And thay han doon right as he wold devyse.  
 Men drinken, and the travers drawe anoon ;  
 The bruyd was brought abedde as stille as stoon ;  
 And whan the bed was with the prest y-blessid,  
 Out of the chambre hath every wight him dressed,  
 And January hath fast in armes take  
 His freisshe May, his paradys, his make.

9681—*vernage*. "*Vernaccia*, ITAL. 'Credo sic dictum (says Skinner) quasi *Veronaccia*, ab agro *Veronensi*, in quo optimum ex hoc genere vinum crescit.' But the Vernage, whatever may have been the reason of its name, was probably a wine of Crete, or of the neighbouring continent. Froiss. v. iv. c. 18. De l'isle de Candé il leur venoit tresbonnes *malvoisies* et grenaches (r. *gernaches*) dont ils estoient largement servis et confortez. Our author in another place, ver. 13000, l. joins together the wines of *Malvesie* and *Vernage*. *Malvasia* was a town upon the eastern coast of the Morea, near the site of the ancient Epidaurus Limera, within a small distance from Crete."—*Tyrwhitt*.

9684—*Constantin*. This medical writer lived about the year 1080, according to Fabricius, *Bibl. Med. Æt.* His works, including the treatise mentioned in the text, were printed at Basil, fol. 1536.

9686—*wold*. The MS. Harl. reads *nas*, which seems not to furnish so good a grammatical construction.

He lullith hir, he kissith hir ful ofte ;  
 With thikke bristlis on his berd unsofte,  
 Lik to the skyn of houndfisch, scharp as brere,  
 (For he was schave al newe in his manere) 9700  
 He rubbith hir about hir tendre face,  
 And sayde thus : " Allas ! I mot trespaco  
 To yow, my spouse, and yow gretly offende,  
 Or tyme come that I wol doun descende,  
 But natheles considerith this," quod he,  
 " Ther nys no werkman, whatsoever he be,  
 That may bothe worko wel and hastily :  
 This wol be doon at leysir parfytly.  
 It is no fors how longe that we pleyo ;  
 In trewe wedlok coupled be we tweye ; 9710  
 And blessed be the yok that we ben inne,  
 For in our actes we mow do no synne.  
 A man may do no synne with his wif,  
 No hurt himselven with his oughno knyf :  
 For we han leve to play us by the lawe."

Thus laborith he, til that the day gan dawo,  
 And than he takith a sop in fyn clarré,  
 And upright in his bed than sittith he.  
 And after that he song ful lowd and clere,  
 And kissed his wyf, and made wantoun cheere. 9720  
 He was al coltissch, ful of ragerye,  
 And ful of jargoun, as a flekked pye.  
 The slakke skin about his nekke schakith,

---

9728—*schaketh*. I have adopted this reading from the *Janet* MS., as being preferable to that of the MS. *Harl. slaketh*, which is a repetition of the idea conveyed by the previous word *slakke*, and seems to create a redundancy in the meaning.

Whil that he song, so chaunteth he and craketh.  
 But God wot what that May thought in hir hert,  
 Whan sche him saugh up sitt yng in his schert.  
 In his night-cappe, and with his nekke lene:  
 Sche praysith nought his pleyng worth a bene.  
 Than sayd he thus: "My reste wol I take  
 Now day is come, I may no lenger wake." 9730  
 And doun he layd his heed and sleep til prime.  
 And afterward, whan that he saugh his tyme,  
 Up riseth January, but freissche May  
 Holdith hir chamber unto the fourthe day,  
 As usage is of wyves for the best.  
 For every labour som tyme moot have rest,  
 Or elles longe may he not endure;  
 This is to say, no lyves creature,  
 Be it of fisch, or brid, or best, or man.  
 Now wol I speke of woful Damyan, 9740  
 That languyssheth for love, as ye schuln here;  
 Therefore I speke to him in this manere.  
 I say, "O sely Damyan, allas!  
 Answere to my demaunde, as in this caas,  
 How schaltow to thy lady, freissche May,  
 Telle thy woo? Sche wol alway say nay;  
 Eek if thou speke, sche wol thy woo bywrewe;  
 God be thy help, I can no better seye."  
 This seke Damyan in Venus fuyr  
 So brennith, that he deyeth for desir; 9750  
 For which he put his lyf in aventure,

---

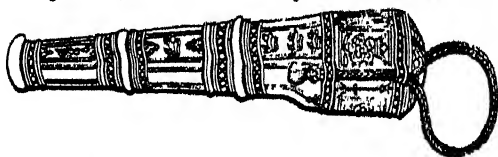
9741—*languyssheth*. The Lansd. MS. reads *longurith*, i.e. falls into languor.

No lenger might he in this wo endure,  
 But prively a penner gan he borwe,  
 And in a letter wrot he al his sorwe,  
 In maner of a compleynt or of a lay,  
 Unto his faire freissche lady May.  
 And in a purs of silk, heng on his schert,  
 He hath it put, and layd it at his hert.

The moone that a-noon was thilke day  
 That January hath weddid froische May  
 In tuo of Taure, was into Cancre gliden;  
 So long hath Mayus in hir chambre abiden,

9700

9753—a *penner*. The *penner* was a case containing the pens, ink, and other apparatus of writing, which the clerk carried about with him, as the Eastern students do at the present day. The accompanying cut represents a *penner* belonging to the weak monarch Henry VI, and left behind him at Waddington Hall, in Yorkshire, in his flight after the battle of Towton.



As such articles belonged only to clergy and scholars, we understand why the "squire" Damyan was obliged to borrow one for his use. An early vocabulary entitled "Nominale" mentions, among the *nomina rerum pertinentium clerico*, "*pennaro, a pener*".

9755—*compleynt...lay*. These were the technical names of two forms of metrical composition.

9761—*In tuo of Taure*. Tyrwhitt alters this reading (which is that of nearly all the MSS.) into *ten*, and observes:—"The greatest number of MSS. read, *tuo, tuo, too, or to*. But the time given (*four dayes complete*, ver. 9767) is not sufficient for the moon to pass from the 2d degree of Taurus into Cancer. The mean daily motion of the moon being = 18° 10'. 35". her motion in 4 days is = 1°. 22'. 42". or not quite 58 degrees; so that supposing her to set out from the 2d of Taurus, she would not, in that time, be advanced beyond the 25th degree of Gemini. If she set out from the 10th degree of Taurus, as I have corrected the text, she might properly enough be said, in four days, to be *gliden into Cancer*."—*Tyrwhitt*.

As custom is unto these nobles alle.  
A bryde schal not eten in the halle,  
Til dayes foure or thre dayes atte lest  
I-passed ben, than let hir go to the fest.  
The fourthe day complet fro noon to noon,  
Whan that the heighe masse was i-doon,  
In halle sitte this January and May,  
As freissch as is the brighte someres day. 9770  
And so bifelle, that this goode man  
Remembrid him upon this Damyan,  
And sayde, " Seinte Mary! how may this be,  
That Damyan entendith not to me?  
Is he ay seek? or how may this bityde?"  
His squiers, which that stode ther bisyde,  
Excusid him, bycause of his syknesse,  
Which letted him to doon his busynesse:  
Noon other cause mighte make him tarie.  
" That me for-thinketh," quod this Januarie; 9780  
" He is a gentil squyer, by my trouthe,  
If that he deyde, it were harm and routhe.  
He is as wys, discret, and eek secré,  
As any man I wot of his degré,  
And therto manerly and servysable,  
And for to be a thrifty man right able.  
But after mete, as soon as ever I may  
I wol myself visit him, and eek May,  
To doon him al the confort that I can."  
And for that word him blessed every man, 9790  
That of his bounté and his gentillesse  
He wolde so comfort in seekenesse

His squyer, for it was a gentil deede.  
 " Dame," quod this January, " tak good heede,  
 At after mete, ye with your wommen alle,  
 (Whan ye han ben in chambre out of this halle)  
 That alle ye goo to se this Damyan :  
 Doth him desport, he is a gentil man,  
 And tellith him that I wil him visite,  
 Have I no thing but rested me a lyto : 9800  
 And spedith yow faste, for I wol abyde  
 Til that ye slepe faste by my syde."  
 And with that word he gan unto him calle  
 A squier, that was marchal of his halle,  
 And told him certeyn thinges that he wolde.

This freisshe May hath streight hir way i-holde  
 With alle hir wommen unto Damyan.  
 Doun by his beddes syde sat scho than,  
 Comfortyng him as goodly as scho may.

This Damyan, whan that his tyme he say, 9810  
 In secré wise, his purs, and eek his bille,  
 In which that he i-writen had his wille,  
 Hath put into hir hond withouton more,  
 Save that he siketh wonder deepe and soro,  
 And softly to hir right thus say he ;  
 " Mercy, and that ye not discover me :  
 For I am deed, if that this thing be kiddo."

---

9817—*be kiddo*. The Harl. MS. reads here and in the following line,—

..... if that this thing discovered he,

This purs in hir bosom had hath scho.

But I prefer the reading here adopted from the Laned. MS., on account of the repetition of rhymes in the other reading.

This purs hath sche inwith hir bosom hud,  
And went hir way ; ye gete no more of me ;  
But unto January comen is sche, 9820  
That on his beddes syde sit ful softe.  
He takith hir, and kissith hir ful ofte :  
And layd him down to slepe, and that anoon.  
Sche feyned hir as that sche moste goon  
Ther as ye woot that every wight moot neede ;  
And whan sche of this bille hath taken heede,  
Sche rent it al to cloutes atte laste,  
And into the privy softely it cast.

Who studieth now but faire freissche May ?  
Adoun by olde January sche lay, 9830  
That slepith, til that the coughe hath him awaked :  
Anoon he prayde stripen hir al naked,  
He wold of hir, he sayd, have some plesaunce ;  
Hir clothis dede him, he sayde, som grevaunce.  
And sche obeieth, be hir lief or loth.  
But lest that precious folk be with me wroth,  
How that he wroughte I dar not telle,  
Or whethir it semed him paradys or helle ;  
But here I lete hem werken in her wise  
Til evensong rong, and than thay most arise. 9840

Whethir it be by desteny or adventure,  
Were it by influence, or by nature,  
Or by constellacioun, that in such estate  
The heven stood that tyme fortunate,  
As for to putte a bille of Venus werkis  
(For alle thing hath tyme, as seyn these clerkis)  
To eny womman for to gete hir love,



I can not say, but grete God above,  
 That knowith that noon acte is causeles,  
 He deme of al, for I wil holde my pees. 9850  
 But soth is this, how that this freisshe May  
 Hath take such impressioun that day,  
 Of pité on this sike Damyan,  
 That from hir herte sche ne dryve can  
 The remembraunce for to doon him case.  
 "Certeyn," thoughtsche, "whom that this thing displease  
 I rekke not, for her I him assure,  
 To love him best of eny creature,  
 Though he no more hadde than his schorte."  
 Lo, pité renneth soone in gentil herte. 9860  
 Heer may ye see, how excellent fraunchise  
 In womman is whan thay narow hem avyse.  
 Som tyraunt is, as ther ben many oon,  
 That hath an hert as hard as is a stoon,  
 Which wold han lete sterven in the place  
 Wel rather than han graunted him hor graco :  
 And hem rejoysen in her cruel prido,  
 And rekken nought to ben an homicido.  
 This gentil May, fulfillid of pité,  
 Right of hir hond a letter maked scho, 9870  
 In which sche grauntith him hir verray gruce ;  
 Ther lakkid nought but oonly day and place,  
 Wher that sche might unto his lust suffise :  
 For it schal be, right as he wol devyse.  
 And whan sche saugh hir tyme upon a day  
 To visite this Damyan goth May,  
 And subtilly this lettre down sche thruste

Under his pylow, rede it if him luste.  
 Sche takith him by the hond, and hard him twiste  
 So secrely, that no wight of it wiste, 9880  
 And bad him be al hool, and forth sche wente  
 To January, whan that he for hir sente.  
 Up ryseth Damyan the nexte morwe,  
 Al passed was his siknes and his sorwe.  
 He kembith him, he pruneth him and pyketh,  
 He doth al that unto his lady likith ;  
 And eek to January he goth as lowe  
 As ever did a dogge for the bowe.  
 He is so plesaunt unto every man,  
 (For craft is al, who so that do it can) 9890  
 That every wight is fayn to speke him good ;  
 And fully in his ladys grace he stood.  
 Thus lete I Damyan about his neede,  
 And in my tale forth I wol procede.

Some clerkes holden that felicité  
 Stant in delit, and therfor certeyn he  
 This noble January, with al his might  
 In honest wise as longith to a knight,  
 Schop him to lyve ful deliciously.  
 His housyng, his array, as honestly 9900  
 To his degré was maked as a kynges.  
 Amonges other of his honest thinges  
 He had a gardyn walled al with stoon,  
 So fair a gardyn wot I no wher noon.  
 For out of doute I verrely suppose,

---

9888—a *dogge for the bowe*. A dog used in shooting. *Conf.* l. 6951.

That he that wroot the Romauns of the Rose,  
 Ne couthe of it the beauté wel devyse :  
 Ne Priapus ne might not wel suffice,  
 Though he be god of gardyns, for to tello  
 The beauté of the gardyn, and the wello, 9910  
 That stood under a laurer alway greene.  
 Ful ofte tyme he Pluto and his queene  
 Preserpina, and al the fayerie,  
 Desporten hem and maken molodye  
 Aboute that welle, and daunced, as men toldo.  
 This noble knight, this January the oldo,  
 Such deynté hath in it to walk and pleyo,  
 That he wold no wight suffre bere the keye,  
 Save he himself, for of the smale wyket  
 He bar alway of silver a smal cliket, 9920  
 With which whan that him list he it unschette.  
 And whan he wolde pay his wyf hir dotte  
 In somer sesoun, thider wold he go,  
 And May his wyf, and no wight but thay tuo ;  
 And thinges which that weren not doon in bedde,  
 He in the gardyn performed hem and spedde.  
 And in this wise many a mery day  
 Lyved this January and freische May ;  
 But worldly joye may not alway endure  
 To January, ne to no creature. 9930

O sodeyn hap ! o thou fortune unstable !  
 Lyk to the scorioun so desceyvable,

---

9908—*Romauns of the Rose*. The *Romance of the Rose* opens with the description of a magnificent garden, which was looked upon by subsequent writers as the highest perfection of such descriptions.

That flaterest with thin heed whan thou wilt styng;  
Thy tayl is deth, thurgh thin envenymynge.  
O britel joye! o sweete venym queynte!  
O monster, that so subtilly canst peynte  
Thyn giftes, under hew of stedfastnesse,  
That thou desceyvest bothe more and lesse!  
Why hastow January thus deceyved,  
That haddist him for thy fulle frend receyved? 9940  
And now thou hast byreft him bothe his yen,  
For sorw of which desireth he to dyen.  
Allas! this noble January fre,  
Amyd his lust and his prosperité  
Is woxe blynd, and that al sodeynly.  
He wepith and he weyleth pitously;  
And therewithal, the fuyr of jalousye  
(Lest that his wif schuld falle in some folye)  
So brent his herte that he wolde fayn  
That som man bothe hir and him had slayn: 9950  
For neyther after his deth, nor in his lyf,  
Ne wold he that sche were love ne wyf,  
But ever lyve as wydow in clothes blake,  
Soul as the turtill that lost hath hir make.  
But atte last, after a moneth or tweye,  
His sorwe gan aswage, soth to seye.  
For whan he wist it may noon other be,  
He paciently took his adversité:  
Save out of doute he may not forgoon,  
That he nas jalous evermore in oon: 9960  
Which jalousie it was so outrageous,  
That neyther in halle, ne in noon other hous,

Ne in noon other place never the mo  
 He nolde suffre hir to ryde or go,  
 But if that he had hond on hir alway.  
 For which ful ofte wepeth freische May,  
 That loveth Damyan so benignely,  
 That sche moot outhur deyen sodeinly,  
 Or elles sche moot han him as hir lest :  
 She waytith whan hir herto wolde brost. 9970  
 Upon that other syde Damyan  
 Bicomen is the sorwfulleste man  
 That ever was, for neyther night no day  
 Ne might he spoke a word to fressche May,  
 As to his purpos, of no such matiere,  
 But if that January most it heere,  
 That had an hond upon hir evermo.  
 But natheles, by writyng to and fro,  
 And privé signes, wist he what scho ment,  
 And sche knew eek the fyn of his intent. 9980

O January, what might it thec availe,  
 If thou might see as fer as schippes sail ?  
 For as good is blynd deceyved be,  
 As to be deceyved whan a man may see.  
 Lo, Argus, which that had an hundred eyen,  
 For al that ever he couthe poure or prien,  
 Yet was he blent, as, God wot, so ben moo,  
 That weneth wisly that it be nought so :  
 Passe over is an ease, I say no more.  
 This freissche May, that I spak of so yore, 9990  
 In warm wex hath emprynted the klikot,  
 That January bar of the smale wiket,

By which into his gardyn ofte he went ;  
 And Damyan that knew al hir entent  
 The cliket counterfeted prively ;  
 Ther nys no more to say, but hastily  
 Som wonder by this cliket schal betyde,  
 Which ye schal heeren, if ye wol abyde.

O noble Ovyde, wel soth saistow, God woot,  
 What sleight is it though it be long and hoot, 10000  
 That he nyl fynd it out in some manere ?  
 By Piramus and Thesbe may men leere ;  
 Though thay were kept ful longe streyt over al,  
 Thay ben accorded, rownyng thurgh a wal,  
 Ther no wight couthe han found out swich a sleight.  
 For now to purpos ; er that dayes eyght  
 Were passed of the moneth of Juyl, bifille  
 That January hath caught so gret a wille,  
 Thorugh eggyng of his wyf, him for to pleye  
 In his gardyn, and no wight but they tweye, 10010  
 That in a morwe unto this May saith he ;  
 “ Rys up, my wif, my love, my lady fre ;  
 The turtlis vois is herd, my douve swete ;  
 The wynter is goon, with his raynes wete.  
 Come forth now with thin eyghen columbine.  
 How fairer ben thy brestes than is the wyne.  
 The gardyn is enclosed al aboute ;  
 Com forth, my swete spouse, out of doute,  
 Thow hast me wounded in myn hert, o wyf :  
 No spot in the knew I in al my lif. 10020

---

10000—*though it*. Tyrwhitt reads *if love*, against the authority of the best MSS.

Com forth, and let us take oure desport,  
I ches the for my wyf and my comfort."

Such olde lewed wordes used he.

On Damyan a signe made sche,  
That he schuld go biforn with his cliket.  
This Damyan than hath opened the wicket,  
And in he stert, and that in such manere,  
That no wight it mighte see nor heere,  
And stille he seet under a bussch. Anoon  
This January, as blynd as is a stoon,  
With Mayus in his hond, and no wight mo,  
Into this freische gardyn is ago,  
And clappid to the wicket sodeinly.

10030

"Now, wyf," quod he, "her nys but ye and I,  
Thou art the creature that I best love :

For by that lord that sit in heven above,  
Lever ich had to dyen on a knyf,  
Than the offende, deere trewe wyf.

For Goddes sake, thenk how I the chees,

Nought for no coveytise douteles,

10040

But oonly for the love I had to the.

And though that I be old and may not se,  
Beeth trewe to me, and I wol telle yow why ;  
Thre thinges, certes, schul ye wyne therby ;  
First, love of Crist, and to your self honour,  
And al myn heritage, toun and tour.

I give it yow, makith chartres as yow leste :

This schal ben doon to morw er sonne reste,

So wisly God my soule bringe to blisse !

I pray yow first in covenaut ye me kisse.

10050

And though that I be jalous, wyt me nought ;  
Ye ben so deep emprinted in my thought,  
That whan that I considre your beauté,  
And therwithal the unlikly eelde of me,  
I may nought, certes, though I schulde dye,  
Forbere to ben out of your companye  
For verray love ; this is withouten doute :  
Now kisse me, wyf, and let us rome aboute.”  
This freissche May, whan sche his wordes herde,  
Benignely to January answerde, 10060  
But first and forward sche bigan to wepe :  
“ I have,” quod sche, “ a soule for to kepe  
As wel as ye, and also myn honour,  
And of my wifhod thilke tendre flour,  
Which that I have ensured in your hond,  
Whan that the prest to yow my body bond :  
Wherfor I wil answer in this manere,  
With the leve of yow, myn owen lord so deere.  
I pray to God that never dawe the day,  
That I ne sterve, as foule as womman may, 10070  
If ever I do unto my kyn that schame,  
Or elles I empaire so my name,  
That I be fals ; and if I do that lak,  
Doth strepe me, and put me in a sak,  
And in the nexte ryver do me drenche :  
I am a gentil womman, and no wenche.  
Why speke ye thus ? but men ben ever untrewē,  
And wommen han reproef of yow ever newe.  
Ye have noon other contenaunce, I leve,  
But speke to us as of untrust and reprevo.” 10080



And with that word sche saugh wher Damyan  
 Sat in the buissh, and coughen sche bigan ;  
 And with hir fyngres signes made sche,  
 That Damyan schuld clymb upon a tre,  
 That charged was with fruyt, and up he went :  
 For verrayly he knew al hir entent,  
 And every signe that sche couthe make,  
 Wel bet than January hir oughne make.  
 For in a letter sche had told him al  
 Of this matier, how he worche schal. 10090  
 And thus I lete him sitte in the pirie,  
 And January and May romynge mirye.

Bright was the day, and bliw the firmament ;  
 Phebus hath of gold his stremes down i-sent  
 To gladen every flour with his warmnesse ;  
 He was that tyme in Gemines, as I gesse,  
 But litel fro his declinacioun  
 Of Canker, Joves exaltacioun.  
 And so bifel that brighte morwen tyde,  
 That in that gardyn, in the ferther syde, 10100  
 Pluto, that is the kyng of fayerye,  
 And many a lady in his compaignie  
 Folwyng his wif, the queene Preserpina,  
 Whiche that he ravesched out of Ethna,  
 Whil that sche gadred floures in the medo,  
 (In Claudian ye may the story rede,  
 How in his grisly carte he hir fette)

---

10108—*Preserpina*. The Harl. MS. reads, by some error of the scribe,—

.... Preserpine,  
 Ech after other as right as a lyne.

This king of fayry than adoun him sette  
 Upon a bench of turves freissh and greene,  
 And right anoon thus sayd he to his queene : 10110

“ My wyf,” quod he, “ ther may no wight say nay,  
 Thexperiens so preveth every day,  
 The tresoun which that womman doth to man.  
 Ten hundrid thousand stories tellen I can  
 Notable of your untrouth and brutelnesse.  
 O Salamon, wys and richest of richesse,  
 Fulfld of sapiens, and of worldly glorie,  
 Ful worthy ben thy wordes to memorie  
 To every wight, that wit and resoun can.  
 Thus praysith he yit the bounté of man ; 10120  
 Among a thousand men yit fond I oon,  
 But of alle wommen found I never noon.  
 Thus saith the king, that knoweth your wikkednesse ;  
 That Jhesus, *filius* Sirac, as I gesse,  
 Ne spekith of yow but selde reverence.  
 A wild fuyr and corrupt pestilence  
 So falle upon your bodies yit to night :  
 Ne see ye not this honorable knight ?  
 Bycause, allas ! that he is blynd and old,  
 His owne man schal make him cokewold. 10130  
 Loo, wher he sitt, the lecchour, in the tre.  
 Now wol I graunten, of my majesté,  
 Unto this olde blinde worthy knight,  
 That he schal have agein his eyghen sight,  
 Whan that his wyf wol do him vilonye ;  
 Than schal he knowe al her harlotrye,

---

10121. *Among a thousand.* See *Ecclesiastes*, vii, 28.

Bothe in reproef of her and other mo."

"Ye schal!" quod Preserpine, "and wol ye so?

Now by my modres Ceres soule I swere,

That I schal give hir suffisaunt answer, 10140

And alle wommen after for hir sake;

That though thay be in any gult i-take,

With face bold thay schul hemself excuse,

And bere hem down that wolde hem accuse.

For lak of answer, noon of hem schal dyen.

Al had ye seyn a thing with bothe your yen,

Yit schul we wymmen visage it hardily,

And wepe and swere and chide subtilly,

That ye schul ben as lewed as ben gees,

What rekkith me of your auctoritees? 10150

I wot wel that this Jew, this Salamon,

Fond of us wommen fooles many oon:

But though he ne fond no good womman,

Yit hath ther founde many another man

Wommen ful trewe, ful good, and vertuous;

Witnesse on hem that dwelle in Cristes hous,

With martirdom thay proved hir constaunce.

The Romain gestes eek make remembraunce

Of many a verray trewe wyf also.

But, sire, be nought wrath, al be it so, 10100

10139—*Ceres*. The Harl. MS. reads *Sires*; the Lansd. *Sire*. *Ceres* is of course the word intended.

10146—The Harl. MS. reads this line,—

Al had a man seyn a thing with bothe his yen.

10158—*The Romain gestes*. Tyrwhitt says that the allusion is to the popular book known as the *Gesta Romanorum*. I am inclined, however, to think it more probable that the poet had in his eye the examples of Lucretia, Portia, and other ladies celebrated in Roman history.

Though that he sayd he fond no good womman,  
 I pray yow tak the sentens of the man :  
 He mente thus, that in sovereign bounté  
 Nis noon but God, that sit in Trinité.  
 Ey, for verrey God that nys but oon,  
 What make ye so moche of Salamon ?  
 What though he made a temple, Goddes hous ?  
 What though he were riche and glorious ?  
 So made he eek a temple of fals godis,  
 How might he do a thing that more forbod is ? 10170  
 Pardé, als fair as ye his name emplastre,  
 He was a lecchour and an ydolastre,  
 And in his eelde he verray God forsook ;  
 And if that God ne hadde (as saith the book)  
 I-spared him for his fadres sake, he scholde  
 Have lost his regne rather than he wolde.  
 I sette right nought of the vilonye,  
 That 3e of wommen write, a boterflie ;  
 I am a womman, needes most I speke,  
 Or elles swelle tyl myn herte breke. 10180  
 For syn he sayd that we ben jangleresses,  
 As ever hool I moote brouke my tresses,  
 I schal not spare for no curtesye  
 To speke him harm, that wold us vilonye."  
 " Dame," quod this Pluto, " be no lenger wroth,  
 I give it up : but sith I swore myn oth,  
 That I wil graunte him his sight agein,  
 My word schal stonde, I warne yow certeyn :  
 I am a kyng, it sit me nought to lye."  
 " And I," quod sche, " am queen of faierie. 10190

Hir answer schal sche have, I undertake ;  
 Let us no mo wordes herof make.

Forsoth I wol no lenger yow contrarie."

Now let us turne agayn to Januarye,  
 That in this gardyn with this faire May  
 Syngeth, ful merier than the papinjay,  
 "Yow love I best, and schal, and other noon."

So long about the aleys is he goon,  
 Til he was come agaynes thilke pirie,  
 Wher as this Damyan sittith ful mirye 10200  
 On heigh, among the freische levyes greene.  
 This freissche May, that is so bright and scheene,  
 Gan for to syke, and sayd, "Allas my syde !  
 Now, sir," quod sche, "for aught that may bityde,  
 I most han of the peres that I see,  
 Or I moot dye, so sore longith me  
 To eten of the smale peris greene :  
 Help for hir love that is of heven queene !  
 I telle yow wel a womman in my plyt  
 May have to fruyt so gret an appetyt, 10210  
 That sche may deyen, but sche it have."

"Allas !" quod he, "that I nad heer a knave  
 That couthe climbe, allas ! allas !" quod he,  
 "For I am blynd." "Ye, sire, no fors," quod scho ;  
 "But wolde ye vouchesauf, for Goddes sake,  
 The piry inwith your armes for to take,  
 (For wel I woot that ye mystruste me)  
 Than schold I clymbe wel y-nough," quod sche,  
 "So I my foot might set upon your bak."  
 "Certes," quod he, "theron schal be no lak, 10220

Might I yow helpe with myn herte blood."  
 He stoupith down, and on his bak sche stood,  
 And caught hir by a twist, and up sche goth.  
 (Ladys, I pray yow that ye be not wroth,  
 I can not glose, I am a rude man :)  
 And sodeinly anoon this Damyan  
 Gan pullen up the smok, and in he throng.

And whan that Pluto saugh this grete wrong,  
 To January he gaf agayn his sight,  
 [And made him see as wel as ever he might. 10230  
 And whan he thus had caught his sight again,]  
 Ne was ther never man of thing so fayn :  
 But on his wyf his thought was evermo.  
 Up to the tree he kest his eyghen tuo,  
 And seigh that Damyan his wyf had dressid  
 In which maner it may not ben expressid,  
 But if I wolde speke uncurteisly.  
 And up he gaf a roryng and a cry,  
 As doth the moder whan the child schal dye ;  
 " Out! help! allas! harrow!" he gan to crie ; 10240  
 " O stronge lady stoure, what dos thou?"  
 And sche answerith : " Sire, what eylyth yow?  
 Have paciens and resoun in your mynde,  
 I have yow holpen on bothe your eyen blynde.

---

10227—In some late MSS., and in the printed editions, several lines of obscene ribaldry are added here and in the subsequent parts of the tale; but, as they are not found in MSS. of any authority, Tyrwhitt very properly omitted them. It may be observed that there are several other variations in parts of this tale in some MSS., which it has not been thought necessary to point out.

10230—This and the following line, given here from Tyrwhitt, are not found in the Harl. MS.

- Up peril of my soule, I schal not lyen,  
 As me was taught to hele with your yen,  
 Was nothing bet for to make yow see,  
 Than stroggle with a man upon a tree :  
 God woot, I dede it in ful good entent."
- "Stroggle!" quod he, "ye, alगत in it went. 10250  
 God give yow bothe on schames deth to dyen !  
 He swyved the; I saugh it with myn yen;  
 And elles be I honged by the hals."
- "Than is," quod sche, "my medicine fals.  
 For certeynly, if that ye mighten see,  
 Ye wold not say tho wordes unto me.  
 Ye han som glymsyng, and no parfyt sight."
- "I se," quod he, "as wel as ever I might,  
 (Thankid be God) with bothe myn yen tuo,  
 And by my trouth me thought he did the so." 10260
- "Ye, mase, mase, goode sir," quod sche ;  
 "This thank have I for I have maad yow see :  
 Allas !" quod sche, "that ever I was so kynde."
- "Now, dame," quod he, "let al passe out of mynde :  
 Com doun, my leef, and if I have myssayd,  
 God help me so, as I am evel appayd.  
 But by my faders soule, I wende have seyn,  
 How that this Damyan had by the leyn,  
 And that thy smok had layn upon thy brest."
- "Ye, sire," quod sche, "ye may wene as yow lest : 10270  
 But, sire, a man that wakith out of his slep,  
 He may not sodeynly wel take keep  
 Upon a thing, ne seen it parfytly,  
 Til that he be adawed verrayly.

Right so a man, that long hath blynd i-be,  
 He may not sodeynly so wel i-se,  
 First whan the sight is newe comen agayn,  
 As he that hath a day or tuo i-sayn.  
 Til that your sight y-stablid be a while,  
 Ther may ful many a sighte yow bigile. 10280  
 Beth war, I pray yow, for, by heven king,  
 Ful many man wenith for to se a thing,  
 And it is al another than it semeth :  
 He that mysconceyveth he mysdemeth."

And with that word sche leep down fro the tre.  
 This January who is glad but he ?  
 He kissith hir, and clippith hir ful ofte,  
 And on hir wombe he strokith hir ful softe ;  
 And to his paleys hom he hath hir lad.  
 Now, goode men, I pray yow to be glad. 10290  
 Thus endith her my tale of Januarye,  
 God blesse us, and his moder seinte Marie !

## THE SQUYERES PROLOGE.

"Ey ! Goddes mercy !" sayd our Hoste tho,  
 " Now such a wyf I pray God keep me fro.  
 Lo, whiche sleightes and subtilitees  
 In wommen ben ; for ay as busy as bees  
 Ben thay us seely men for to desceyve,  
 And from a soth ever wol thay weyve.  
 By this Marchaundes tale it proveth wel.  
 But douteles, as trewe as eny steel 10300  
 I have a wyf, though that sche pore be ;



But of hir tonge a labbyng schrewe is sche;  
 And yit sche hath an heep of vices mo.  
 Therof no fors; let alle such thinges go.  
 But wite ye what? in counseil be it seyð,  
 Me rewith sore I am unto hir teyð;  
 And if I scholde reken every vice,  
 Which that sche hath, i-wis I were to nyce;  
 And cause why, it schuld reported be  
 And told to hir of som of this meyné, 10310  
 (Of whom it needith not for to declare,  
 Syn wommen connen oute such chaffare);  
 And eek my witte suffisith nought therto  
 To tellen al; wherfor my tale is do.

"Sir Squier, com forth, if that your wille be,  
 And say us a tale of love, for certes ye  
 Connen theron as moche as ony man."

"Nay, sire," quod he; "but I wil say as I can  
 With herty wil, for I wil not rebelle  
 Against your wille; a tale wil I telle, 10320  
 Have me excused if that I speke amys;  
 My wil is good; and thereto my tale is this."

#### THE SQUYERES TALE.

At Sarraz, in the lond of Tartary,  
 Ther dwelled a kyng that werryed Russy,

10316—*of love*. These two words are omitted in MS. Harl., but they seem necessary for the sense and metre.

*The Squyres Tale*. It is unknown at present from what source Chaucer derived this Tale, which is not found (as far as I am aware) in any other form in the literature of the Middle Ages. It is to be regretted that

Thurgh which ther deyed many a doughty man :  
 This nobil kyng was cleped Cambynskan,  
 Which in his tyme was of so gret renoun,  
 That ther nas nowher in no regioun  
 So excellent a lord in alle thing :  
 Him lakked nought that longed to a kyng, 10330  
 As of the secte of which that he was born.  
 He kept his lawe to which he was sworn,  
 And therto he was hardy, wys, and riche,  
 And pitous and just, and alway y-liche,  
 Soth of his word, benign and honourable ;  
 Of his corage as eny centre stable ;  
 Yong, freisch, and strong, in armes desirous,  
 As eny bachiler of al his hous.  
 A fair person he was, and fortunat,  
 And kepte so wel his real astat, 10340  
 That ther was nowher such a ryal man.  
 This noble kyng, this Tartre, this Cambynskan,  
 Hadde tuo sones by Eltheta his wyf,

---

Chaucer left it unfinished. It may be observed that throughout the tale the name of the Tartar king is Cambynskan, in the MS. Harl as well as in the Lansdowne and other MSS. It is almost with regret that we give up the form of the name rendered classic by Milton,—

Or call up him that left half told  
 The story of Cambuscan bold,  
 Of Camball, and of Algarsife,  
 And who had Canace to wife,  
 That own'd the virtuous ring of glas ;  
 And of the wond'rous horse of bras  
 On which the Tartar king did ride.

(*Il Penseroso.*)

10324—*Russy.* The Tartars and Russians were constantly engaged in hostilities with each other from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries.

Of which the eldest highte Algarsyf,  
 That other was i-cleped Camballo.  
 A doughter had this worthi king also,  
 That yongest was, and highte Canace :  
 But for to telle yow al hir beauté,  
 It lith not on my tonge, ne my connyng,  
 I dar nought undertake so heigh a thing : 10350  
 Myn Englissh eek is insufficient,  
 It moste be a rethor excellent  
 That couth his colours longyng for that art,  
 If he schold hir discryve in eny part :  
 I am non such, I mot speke as I can.

And so bifel it, that this Cambynskan  
 Hath twenty wynter born his dyademe :  
 As he was wont fro yer to yer, I deme,  
 He leet the fest of his nativité  
 Don cryen, thurghout Sarray his cité, 10360  
 The last Idus of March, after the yeer.  
 Phebus the sonne was joly and cleer,  
 For he was neigh his exaltacioun  
 In Marces face, and in his mansioun  
 In Aries, the colerik, the hote signe :  
 Ful lusty was the wedir and benigne,  
 For which the foules agein the sonne scheene,  
 What for the sesoun and for the yonge groone,  
 Ful lowde song in here affecciouns :  
 Hem semed have geten hem protecciouns 10370

---

10344.—*Algarsyf*. The Harl MS. reads *Algaryf*, and in the next line *Samballo* for *Camballo*, which are probably mere errors of the scribe.

Agens the swerd of wynter kene and cold.  
 This Cambynskan, of which I have told,  
 In royal vesture, sitting on his deys  
 With dyadem, ful heigh in his paleys;  
 And held his fest solempne and so riche,  
 That in this worlde was there noon it liche.  
 Of which if I schal tellen al tharray,  
 Than wold it occupie a someres day;  
 And eek it needith nought for to devyse  
 At every cours the ordre and the servyse. 10380  
 I wol nat tellen of her straunge sewes,  
 Ne of her swannes, ne here heroun-sewes.  
 Ek in that lond, as tellen knightes olde,  
 Ther is som mete that is ful deynté holde,  
 That in this lond men recch of it but smal:  
 Ther is no man it may reporten al.  
 I wol not tarien you, for it is pryme,  
 And for it is no fruyt, but los of tyme,  
 Unto my purpos I wol have my recours.  
 That so bifelle after the thridde cours, 10390  
 Whil that this kyng sit thus in his nobleye,  
 Herkyng his mynstrales her thinges pleye  
 Byforne him atte boord deliciously,  
 In atte halle dore al sodeynly  
 Ther com a knight upon a steed of bras,

---

10382—*swannes*. . *heroun-sewes*. It is hardly necessary to observe that *swans* were formerly eaten at table, and considered among the choicest ornaments of the festive board. Tyrwhitt informed us that at the enthronization of archbp. Nevil, 6 Edward IV, there were "*heronshawes* iii. c." (*Ireland, Collect.* vol. vi, 2), and that at another feast in 1530, we read of "16 *hearonsews*, every one 12*d.*" (*Peck's Des. Cur.* vol. ii, 12.)

And in his hond a brod myroure of glas ;  
Upon his thomb he had of gold a ryng,  
And by his side a naked swerd hangyng :  
And up he rideth to the heyghe bord.  
In al the halle ne was ther spoke a word, 10400  
For mervayl of this knight ; him to byholde  
Ful besily they wayten yong and olde.

This straunge knight that cam thus sodeynly,  
Al armed sauf his heed ful richely,  
Salued the kyng and queen, and lordes alle  
By ordre, as they seten into halle,  
With so heigh reverens and observaunce,  
As wel in speche as in contynaunce,  
That Gaweyn with his olde curtesye,  
They he were come agein out of fayrye, 10410  
Ne couthe him nought amende with no word.  
And after this, biforn the highe bord  
He with a manly vois sayd this message,  
After the forme used in his langage,  
Withouten vice of sillabil or letter.  
And for his tale schulde seme the better,  
Accordaunt to his wordes was his cheere,  
As techeth art of speche hem that it leere.  
Al be it that I can nat sowne his style,  
Ne can nat clymben over so heigh a style, 10420  
Yit say I this, as to comun entent,  
Thus moche amounteth al that ever he ment,  
If it so be that I have it in mynde.

---

10409—*Gaweyn*. The Harl. MS. reads *Ewen*. Gaweyn was celebrated in medieval romance as the most courteous of Arthur's knights.

He sayd: "The kyng of Arraby and of Ynde,  
 My liege lord, on this solempne day  
 Saluteth you as he best can or may,  
 And sendeth you, in honour of your feste,  
 By me, that am redy at al his heste,  
 This steede of bras, that esily and wel  
 Can in the space of o day naturel, 10430  
 (This is to say, in four and twenty houres)  
 Wher so yow lust, in droughthe or in schoures,  
 Beren your body into every place,  
 To which your herte wilneth for to pace,  
 Withouten wem of you, thurgh foul and fair.  
 Or if you lust to flee as heigh in thair,  
 As doth an egle, whan him list to sore,  
 This same steede schal bere you evermore  
 Without harm, til ye be ther yow leste,  
 (Though that ye slepen on his bak or reste), 10440  
 And torne agein, with wrything of a pyn.  
 He that it wrought, he cowthe many a gyn;  
 He wayted many a constellacioun,  
 Er he had do this operacioun,  
 And knew ful many a seal and many a bond.  
 "This mirour eek, that I have in myn hond,  
 Hath such a mighte, that men may in it see  
 When ther schal falle eny adversité

---

10445—*seal*. The making and arrangement of seals was one of the important operations of medieval magic, and treatises on this subject are found in manuscripts. One of these was believed to have been compiled by the children of Israel in the Desert. A copy of this is found in MS. Arundel, No. 295, fol. 265, which commences with the statement—*In nomine Domini. Incipit liber preciosus et secretus sigillorum quem fecerunt filii Israel in deserto secundum motus et cursus siderum, etc.*

Unto your regne, or to your self also,  
 And openly, who is your frend or fo. 10450  
 And over al this, if eny lady bright  
 Hath set hir hert on eny maner wight,  
 If he be fals, sche schal his tresoun see,  
 His newe love, and his subtilité,  
 So openly, that ther schal nothing hyde.  
 Wherfor ageins this lusty somer tyde  
 This mirour and this ryng, that ye may see,  
 He hath send to my lady Canacee,  
 Your excellente doughter that is heere.

“ The vertu of this ryng, if ye wol heere, 10460  
 Is this, that who so lust it for to were  
 Upon hir thomb, or in hir purs to bere,  
 Ther is no foul that fleeth under the heven,  
 That sche ne schal understonden his steven,  
 And know his menyng openly and pleyn,  
 And answer him in his langage ageyn :  
 And every gras that groweth upon roote  
 Sche schal eek know, to whom it wol do boote,  
 Al be his woundes never so deep and wyde.

“ This naked sword, that hangeth by my syde, 10470  
 Such vertu hath, that what man that it smyte,  
 Thurghout his armur it wol kerve and byte,  
 Were it as thikke as a braunched ook :  
 And what man is i-wounded with the strook  
 Schal never be hool, til that you lust of grace  
 To strok him with the plat in thilke place  
 Ther he is hurt ; this is as moche to seyn,  
 Ye moote with the platte sword agein  
 Stroke him in the wound, and it wol close.

This is the verray soth withouten glose, 10480  
It failleth nought, whil it is in your hold."

And whan this knight thus had his tale told,  
He rit out of the halle, and doun he light:  
His steede, which that schon as sonne bright,  
Stant in the court as stille as eny stoon.  
This knight is to his chambre lad anoon,  
And is unarmed, and to mete i-sett.  
This presentz ben ful richely i-fett,  
This is to sayn, the swerd and the myrrour,  
And born anon unto the highe tour, 10490  
With certein officers ordeynd therfore;  
And unto Canace the ryng is bore  
Solempnely, ther sche syt atte table;  
But sikerly, withouten eny fable,  
The hors of bras, that may nat be remewed,  
It stant, as it were to the ground i-glewed;  
Ther may no man out of the place it dryve  
'For noon engyn of wyndas or polyve:  
And cause why, for they can nought the craft,  
And therfor in the place thei have it laft, 10500  
Til that the knight hath taught hem the manere  
To voyden him, as ye schul after heere.

Greet was the pres that swarmed to and fro  
To gauren on this hors that stondeth so;  
For it so high was, and so brod and long,  
So wel proporcioned to be strong,

10498—*wyndas*. The Harl. MS. reads *wyndyng*.

10505—*high*. The Harl. MS. reads *wyd*.



Right as it were a steed of Lumbardye :  
 Therto so horsly, and so quyk of ye,  
 As it a gentil Poyleys courser were :  
 For certes, fro his tayl unto his eere 10510  
 Nature ne art ne couthe him nought amende  
 In no degré, as al the poepel wende.  
 But evermore her moste wonder was,  
 How that it couthe goon, and was of bras ;  
 It was of fayry, as the poeple semed.  
 Diverse peple diversly they demed ;  
 As many hedes, as many wittes been.  
 They murmured, as doth a swarm of been,  
 And made skiles after her fantasies,  
 Rehersyng of the olde poetries, 10520  
 And seyden it was i-like the Pagasé,  
 The hors that hadde wynges for to fle,  
 Or elles it was the Grekissch hors Synon,  
 That broughte Troye to destruccioun,  
 As men may in the olde gestes rede.  
 " Myn hert," quod oon, " is evermore in drede,  
 I trow som men of armes ben therinne,

---

10509—*a gentil Poyleys courser* "A horse of *Apulia*, which in old French was usually called *Poille*. The horses of that country were much esteemed. MS. *Bod.* James vi, 142. Richard, Archbp. of Armagh, in the xivth century, says in praise of our St. Thomas, 'quod nec mulus Hispanie, nec dextrarius, *Apulie*, nec repedo *Æthiopie*, nec elephantus *Asie*, nec camelus *Syrie* hoc asino nostro Anglie aptior sive audentior invenitur ad prælia.' He had before informed his audience, that *Thomas*, Anglice, idem est quod *Thom Asinus*. There is a patent in Rymer, 2 E. II, *De Dextrariis in Lumbardiâ emendis*."—*Tyrwhitt*.

10521—the *Pagasé*.—i.e. Pegasus. In the margin of the Harl. MS. it is explained in Latin, i. *equus pegaseus*.

10523—*Synon*. Sinon, according to Grecian story, was the maker of the wooden horse by means of which Troy was finally taken.

That schapen hem this cité for to wynne :  
 It were good that such thing were knowe."  
 Another rownded to his felaw lowe, 10530  
 And sayde : " It lyth, for it is rather lik  
 An apparence maad by som magik,  
 As jogelours pleyen at this festes grete."  
 Of sondry thoughtes thus they jangle and trete,  
 As lewed peple demeth comunly  
 Of thinges that ben maad more subtilly,  
 Than they can in her lewednes comprehende,  
 They deemen gladly to the badder ende.  
 And som of hem wondred on the mirrour,  
 That born was up into the maister tour, 10540  
 How men might in it suche thinges se.  
 Another answerd, and sayd, it might wel be  
 Naturelly by composiciouns  
 Of angels, and of heigh reflexiouns;  
 And sayde that in Rome was such oon.  
 They speeke of Alhazen and Vitilyon,  
 And Aristotle, that writen in her lyves  
 Of queynte myrrours and prospectyves,  
 As knowen they that han her bokes herd.  
 And other folk have wondred on the swerd, 10550  
 That wolde passe thoroughout every thing :

10544—heigh. Other MSS., with Tyrwhitt, read *slyhe* or *sleigh*, sly.

10545—in Rome. The erection of this mirror was one of the feats of the legendary Virgil, and will be found described in the early English poem of the *Seven Sages*.

10546—*Alhazen and Vitilyon*. The Harl. MS. reads *Alceyt* for *Alhazen*, and the Lansd. MS. *Alocen*. "*Alhazeni et Vitellonis Opticæ* are extant, printed at Basil, 1572. The first is supposed by his Editor to have lived about A.D. 1100, and the second in A.D. 1270."—*Tyrwhitt*.

And fel in speche of Telophus the kyng,  
 And of Achilles for his queynte spere,  
 For he couthe with it bothe hele and dere,  
 Right in such wise as men may with the swerd,  
 Of which right now ye have your selven herd.  
 They speeken of sondry hardyng of metal,  
 And speken of medicines therwithal,  
 And how and whan it schulde harded be,  
 Which is unknowe alगत unto me. 10560  
 Tho speeken they of Canacees ryng,  
 And seyden alle, that such a wonder thing  
 Of craft of rynges herd they never noon,  
 Sauf that he Moyses and kyng Salamon  
 Hadden a name of connyng in such art.  
 Thus seyen the peple, and drawen hem apart.  
 But natheles som seiden that it was  
 Wonder thing to make of ferne aisschen glas,  
 And yit is glas nought like aisschen of ferne,  
 But for they han i-knowen it so ferne : 10570  
 Therfor cesseth her janglyng and her wonder.

10552—*Telephus*. Telephus, king of Mysia, in attempting to hinder the Greeks from marching through his country against Troy, was wounded by Achilles, and was informed by the oracle that his wound could only be cured by being touched by the spear which had made it. Whence Propertius says,—

Mysus et Hæmonii juvenis qui cuspidè vulnus  
 Senserat, hoc ipsa cuspidè sensit opem.

And Ovid,—

Telephus æterna consumptus tabe perisset,  
 Si non quæ nocuit dextra tulisset opem.

10564—*Moses and kyng Salamon*. These personages, especially the latter, had a high reputation (derived apparently from the Arabs) in the Middle Ages for their skill in magic.

10566—and drawen hem apart. The Harl. MS. reads, *the peple on every part*.

As sore wondred som of cause of thonder,  
 On ebbe and flood, on gossomer, and on myst,  
 And on alle thing, til that the cause is wist.  
 Thus janglen they, and demen and devyse,  
 Til that the kyng gan fro his bord arise.

Phebus hath left the angel merydyonal,  
 And yit ascendyng was a best roial,  
 The gentil Lyoun, with his Aldryan,  
 Whan that this gentil kyng, this Cambynskan, 10580  
 Ros fro his bord, ther as he sat ful hye :  
 Biforn him goth ful lowde menstralceye,  
 Til he cam to his chambre of parementz,  
 Ther as ther were divers instrumentz,  
 That is y-like an heven for to heere.

Now dauncen lusty Venus children deere :  
 For in the fisch her lady sat ful heyghe,  
 And loketh on hem with a frendly eyghe.  
 This noble kyng is set upon his trone ;  
 This straunge knight is fet to him ful sone, 10590  
 And in the daunce he gan with Canace.

10577—*left*. The Harl. MS. reads *lost*. This MS. has in several instances *lost* for *left*, and *vice versa*.

10579—*Aldryan*. The Harl. MS. reads *Adryan*.

10583—*chambre of parementz*. "*Chambre de parent*, is translated by Cotgrave, the presence-chamber; and *Lit de parent* a bed of state. *Parements* originally signified all sorts of ornamental furniture, or clothes, from *parer*, Fr. to adorn. See ver. 2503 and Leg. of G. W. Dido, ver. 181.

To dauncing chambres ful of parementes,  
 Of riche beddes and of pavementes,  
 This Eneas is ledde after the mete.

The Italians have the same expression. Ist. d. Conc. Trident. l. iii. Il Pontefice—ritornato alla camera de' parmenti co' Cardinali.—"*Tyrwhitt*.

10587.—*in the fisch*.—i.e. in the zodiacal sign *pisces*. See before, the note on l. 6284.

Her is the revel and the jolyté,  
That is not able a dul man to devyse :  
He most have knowe love and his servise,  
And ben a festly man, as freisch as May,  
That schulde you devyse such array.  
Who couthe telle you the forme of daunce  
So uncouth, and so freische countinaunce,  
Such subtil lokyng of dissimilynges,  
For drede of jalous folk apparceyvynge? 10600  
No man but Launcolet, and he is deed.  
Therefore I passe over al this lustyheed,  
I say no more, but in this jolynesse  
I lete hem, til men to soper hem dresse.  
The styward byt the spices for to hye  
And eek the wyn, in al this melodye;  
Thes usschers and thes squyers ben agon,  
The spices and the wyn is come anon :  
They eet and drank, and whan this had an ende,  
Unto the temple, as resoun was, they wende : 10610  
The servise doon, they soupen al by day.  
What needeth you to rehersen her array?  
Ech man wot wel, that a kynges feste  
Hath plenté, to the lest and to the meste,  
And deyntees mo than ben in my knowyng.  
At after souper goth this noble kyng<sup>h</sup>  
To see this hors of bras, with al his route  
Of lordes and of ladyes him aboute.  
Swich wondryng was ther on this hors of bras,  
That seth this grete siege of Troye was,  
Ther as men wondrid on an hors also, 10620

Ne was ther such a wondryng as was tho.  
But fynally the kyng asked the knight  
The vertu of this courser, and the might,  
And prayd him tellen of his governaunce.  
The hors anoon gan for to trippe and daunce,  
Whan that the knight leyd hand upon his rayne,  
And sayde, " Sir, ther is nomore to sayne,  
But whan you lust to ryde any where,  
Ye moote trille a pyn, stant in his ere, 10630  
Which I schal telle you betwen us two,  
Ye moste nempne him to what place also,  
Or what countré you luste for to ryde.  
And whan ye come ther you lust abyde,  
Bid him descende, and trille another pynne,  
(For therin lith theffet of al the gynne)  
And he wol down descend and do your wille,  
And in that place he wol abyde stille:  
Though al the world had the contrary swore,  
He schal nat thennes be i-throwe ne bore. 10640  
Or if you lust to bid him thennes goon,  
Trille this pyn, and he wol vanyssh anoon  
Out of the sight of every maner wight,  
And come agein, be it by day or night,  
Whan that you lust to clepen him agayn  
In such a gyse, as I schal yow sayn  
Betwixe you and me, and therfor soone,  
Byd whan you lust, ther nys nomor to doone."  
Enformed whan the kyng was of the knight,  
And had conceyved in his wit aright 10650  
The maner and the forme of al this thing,

Ful glad and blith, this noble doughty kyng  
 Repeyryng to his revel, as biforn,  
 The bridel is unto the tour i-born,  
 And kept among his jewels leef and deere :  
 The hors vanyscht, I not in what manere,  
 Out of her sight, ye get nomore of me :  
 But thus I lete him in his jolité  
 This Cambinskan his lordes festeyng,  
 Til wel neigh the day bigan to spryng.

*Incipit secunda pars.*

The norice of digestioun, the sleep, 10660  
 Gan to him wynk, and bad of him take keep,  
 That moche mete and labour wol have his rest :  
 And with a galpyng mouth hem alle he keste,  
 And sayd, that it was tyme to lye down,  
 For blood was in his dominacioun :  
 “ Cherischeth blood, natures frend,” quod he.  
 They thankyn him galpyng, by two and thre ;  
 And every wight gan drawe him to his rest,  
 As sleep hem bad, they took it for the best. 10670  
 Here dremes schul not now be told for me;

---

10668—*moche mete*.—This reading is taken from the Lands. MS. The Harl. MS. has *that mirthe and labour*, the word *merthe* being perhaps a misreading for *mete*. Tyrwhitt reads *mochel drinke*, and observes,—“ So MSS. C. 1. HA. In MS. A. it is, *That mirthe and labour*. In Ask. 1. 2. *Thog after moche labour*. In several other MSS. and Editt. C. 1. 2, *That moche mete and labour*. We must search further, I apprehend, for the true meaning.”

10668—*blood*. According to the old physicians, blood was in domination during the latter part of the night and the earlier part of the day. Tyrwhitt quotes from the lib. Galeno adscr. de natura, etc., tom. v, p. 327, *Sanguis dominatur horis septem ab hora noctis nona ad horam diei tertiam*.

Ful were here heedes of fumosité,  
 That causeth drem, of which ther is no charge.  
 They sleepen til it was prime large,  
 The moste part, but it were Canace;  
 Sche was ful mesurable, as wommen be.  
 For of hir fader had sche take hir leve  
 To go to reste, soon after it was eve;  
 Hir luste not appalled for to be,  
 Ne on the morwe unfestly for to se; 10680  
 And kept hir firste sleep, and then awook.  
 For such a joye sche in hir herte took,  
 Bothe of hir queynte ryng, and hir myrrour,  
 That twenty tyme chaunged hire colour;  
 And in hire sleep, right for the impressioun  
 Of hir myrrour, sche had a visioun.  
 Wherfor, or that the sonne up gan glyde,  
 Sche cleped upon hir maistresse beside,  
 And sayde, that hire luste for to ryse.  
 These olde wommen, that ben gladly wyse, 10690  
 As is here maystresse, answered her anoon,  
 And sayd, "Madame, whider wold ye goon  
 Thus erly? for folk ben alle in reste."  
 "I wil," quod sche, "aryse, for me leste  
 No lenger for to slepe, and walke aboute."  
 Hir maistres clepeth wommen a gret route,  
 And up they risen, a ten other a twelve.  
 Up ryseth fresshe Canace hir selve,  
 As rody and bright, as is the yonge sonne  
 That in the ram is ten degrees i-ronne; 10700

---

10700—*ten*. This is the reading of the Harl. and Lausd. MSS.  
 Tyrwhitt reads, *four degrees*. L



No heihier was he, whan sche redy was ;  
And forth sche walked esily a pas,  
Arayed after the lusty sesoun soote  
Lightly for to play, and walke on foote,  
Nought but with fyve or six of hir meyné ;  
And in a trench fer in the park goth sche.  
The vapour, which that of the erthe glod,  
Maketh the sonne seme rody and brod :  
But natheles, it was so fair a sight,  
That it made alle here hertes for to light, 10710  
What for the sesoun, what for the mornyng.  
And for the foules that sche herde syng.  
For right anoon sche wiste what they ment  
Right by here song, and knew al here entent.

The knotte, why that every tale is told,  
If that it be taryed til lust be cold  
Of hem that han it after herkned yore,  
The savour passeth ever lenger the more,  
For fulsomnes of the prolixité :  
And by this same resoun thinketh me 10720  
I schulde to the knotte condescende,  
And make of hir walkynge sone an ende.

Amyddes a tree for-druye, as whit as chalk,  
As Canace was pley yng in hir walk,  
There sat a faukoun over hir heed ful hye,  
That with a pitous vois bigan to crye,  
That al the woode resowned of hire cry, .  
And beten hadde sche hir self so pitously  
With bothe hir wynges, to the reede blood  
Ran endelong the tree, ther as sche stood. 10730

And ever in oon sche cried and sche schryght,  
 And with hir bek hir selve so sche pight,  
 That ther nys tigre non ne cruel beste,  
 That dwelleth eyther in wood, or in foreste,  
 That nold han wept, if that he wepen cowde,  
 For sorw of hir, sche schright alwey so lowde.  
 For ther nas never yit no man on lyve,  
 If that he couthe a faukoun wel discrive,  
 That herd of such another of fairnesse  
 As wel of plumage, as of gentillesse 10740  
 Of schap, of al that might i-rekened be.  
 A faukoun peregryn than semed sche,  
 Of fremde lond; and ever as sche stood,  
 Sche swowned now and now for lak of blood,  
 Til wel neigh is sche fallen fro the tre.  
 This faire kynges doughter, Canace,  
 That on hir fynger bar the queynte ryng,  
 Thurgh which sche understood wel every thing  
 That eny foul may in his lydne sayn,  
 And couthe answer him in his lydne agayn, 10750  
 Hath understonde what this faukoun seyde,  
 And wel neigh almost for the rewthe'sche deyde:  
 And to the tree sche goth ful hastily,  
 And on this faukoun loketh pitously,

---

10742—a *faukoun peregryn*. "This species of falcon is thus described in the *Tresor de Brunet Latin*, P. 1, Ch. *Des Faucons*. MS. Reg. 19, C. x. 'La seconde lignie est *faucons*, que hom apele *pelerins*, par ce que nus ne trove son ni. ains est pris autresi come en *pelerinage*. et est mult legiers a norrir, et mult cortois, et vaillans, et de bone maniere.' Chaucer adds, that this Falcon was of *fremde*, or *fremed, lond*; from a *foreign country*." —*Tyrwhitt*.

And held hir lappe abrod, for wel sche wist  
 The faukoun moste falle fro the twist,  
 Whan that she swowned next, for lak of blood.  
 A long while to wayten hir sche stood,  
 Til atte last sche spak in this manere  
 Unto the hauk, as ye schul after heere. 10760  
 "What is the cause, if it be for to telle,  
 That ye ben in that furyalle peyne of helle?"  
 Quod Canace unto this hauk above;  
 "Is this for sorwe of deth, or elles love?  
 For as I trowe, this ben causes tuo,  
 That causen most a gentil herte wo.  
 Of other harm it needeth nought to speke,  
 For ye your self upon your self awreke;  
 Which preveth wel, that either ire or drede  
 Mote ben enchesoun of your cruel dede, 10770  
 Sith that I see noon other wight you chace.  
 For love of God, so doth your selve grace:  
 Or what may ben your helpe? for west ner est  
 Ne saugh I never er now no bryd ne beste,  
 That ferde with him self so pitously.  
 Ye sle me with your sorwe so verrily,  
 I have of you so gret compassioun.  
 For Goddes love, come fro the tree adoun;  
 And as I am a kynges doughter trewe,  
 If that I verrayly the cause knewe 10780  
 Of your disese, if it lay in my might,  
 I wold amenden it, or that it wer night,

---

10782—*Or that it were night.* The Harl. MS. reads, *if that I might*; which appears to be too nearly a repetition of the conclusion of the preceding line.

Als wisly help me grete God of kynde.  
And herbes schal I right y-nowe fynde,  
To helen with your hurtes hastyly.”  
Tho schright this faukoun more pitously  
Than ever sche did, and fil to ground anoon,  
And lay aswowne, deed as eny stoon,  
Til Canace hath in hir lap y-take,  
Unto that tyme sche gan of swowne slake ; 10790  
And after that sche gan of swown abreyde,  
Right in hir haukes lydne thus sche sayde.  
“ That pité renneth sone in gentil hert  
(Felyng his similitude in peynes smerte)  
Is proved alday, as men may see,  
As wel by werk as by auctorité ;  
For gentil herte kepeth gentillesse.  
I see wel, that ye have on my distresse  
Compassioun, my faire Canace,  
Of verray wommanly benignité,  
That nature in your principles hath set. 10800  
But for noon hope for to fare the bet,  
But for to obeye unto your herte fre,  
And for to make othere war by me,  
As by the whelp chastised is the lyoun ;  
And for that cause and that conclusioun,  
Whiles that I have a leyser and a space,  
Myn harm I wil confessen er I pace.”  
And whil sche ever of hir sorwe tolde,  
That other wept, as sche to water wolde,  
Til that the faucoun bad hir to be stille, 10810  
And with a sighhe thus sche sayd hir tille.

"Ther I was bred, (allas that ilke day!)  
 And fostred in a roch of marble gray  
 So tendrely, that nothing eyled me,  
 I ne wiste not what was adversité,  
 Til I couthe flee ful heigh under the sky.  
 Tho dwelled a tercelet me faste by,  
 That semed welle of alle gentillesse;  
 Al were he ful of tresoun and falsnesse,  
 It was i-wrapped under humble cheere, 10820  
 And under heewe of trouthe in such manere,  
 Under plesaunce, and under besy payne,  
 That no wight wende that he couthe feyne,  
 So deep in greyn he deyed his colours.  
 Right as a serpent hut him under floures  
 Til he may see his tyme for to byte;  
 Right so this god of loves ypocrite  
 Doth so his sermonys and his observaunce,  
 Under subtil colour and aqueyntaunce,  
 That sowneth unto gentillesse of love. 10830  
 As in a tombe is al the faire above,  
 And under is the corps, whiche that ye wot;  
 Such was this ipocrite, bothe cold and hot,  
 And in this wise he served his entent,  
 That, sauf the feend, noon wiste what he ment:  
 Til he so long had weped and compleyned,

---

10827—*god of loves ypocryte*. This is Tyrwhitt's reading. The Harl. MS. has, *this god of love, this ypocryte*, which appears not to give so good a meaning. The Lansd. MS. reads, *this god of love ipocrite*.

10828—In the Lansd. MS., with which Tyrwhitt agrees, these two lines stand thus,—

Dothe so his ceremonis and obeiceances,  
 And keped in semblant al his observances.

And many a yeer his service to me feyned,  
Til that myn hert, to pitous and to nyce,  
Al innocent of his crouned malice,  
For-fered of his deth, as thoughte me, 10840  
Upon his othes and his sewerté,  
Graunted him love, on this condicioun,  
That evermo myn honour and my renoun  
Were saved, both pryvy and apert;  
That is to sayn, that, after his desert,  
I gaf him al myn hert and al my thought,  
(God woot, and he, that other weye nought)  
And took his hert in chaunge of myn for ay.  
But soth is sayd, go sithens many a day,  
A trew wight and a theef thenketh nought oon. 10850  
And when he saugh the thyng so fer i-gooun,  
That I had graunted him fully my love,  
In such a wyse as I have sayd above,  
And geven him my trewe hert as fré  
As he swor that he gaf his herte to me,  
Anon this tigre, ful of doublenesse,  
Fil on his knees with so gret devoutenesse,  
With so high reverence, as by his chere,  
So lyk a gentil lover of manere,  
So ravysched, as it semede, for joye, 10860  
That never Jason, ne Parys of Troye,  
Jason? certes, ne noon other man,  
Sith Lameth was, that altherfirst bygan  
To loven two, as writen folk biforn,  
Ne never sith the firste man was born,  
Ne couthe man by twenty thousand part

Contrefete the sophemes of his art;  
Ne were worthy to unbokel his galoche,  
Ther doublenes of feynyng schold approche,  
Ne so couthe thankyn a wight, as he did me. 10870  
His maner was an heven for to see  
To eny womman, were sche never so wys;  
So peynteth he and kembeth poynt devys,  
As wel his wordes, as his continaunce.  
And I so loved him for his obeisaunce,  
And for the trouthe I demed in his herte,  
That if so were that eny thing him smerte,  
Al were it never so litel, and I it wist,  
Me thought I felte deth at myn hert twist.  
And schortly, so ferforth this thing is went, 10880  
That my wil was his willes instrument;  
This is to say, my wille obeied his wille  
In alle thing, as fer as rescoun fille,  
Kepyng the boundes of my worschip ever:  
Ne never had I thing so leef, ne lever,  
As him, God woot, ne never schal nomo.  
This laste lenger than a yeer or two,  
That I supposed of him nought but good.  
But fynally, atte laste thus it stood,  
That fortune wolde that he moste twynne 10890  
Out of the place which that I was inne.  
Wher me was wo, it is no questioun;  
I can nat make of it descripcioun.  
For o thing dar I telle boldely,  
I know what is the peyno of deth, therby,  
Which harm I felt, for he ne mighte bylove.

So on a day of me he took his leve,  
 So sorwful eek, that I went verrayly,  
 That he had feled als moche harm as I, 10900  
 Whan that I herd him speke, and saugh his hewe.  
 But natheles, I thought he was so trewe,  
 And eek that he schulde repeire ageyn  
 Withinne a litel while, soth to seyn,  
 And resoun wold eek that he moste go  
 For his honour, as oft happeth so.  
 Than I made vertu of necessité,  
 And took it wel, sethens it moste be.  
 As I best might, I had fro him my sorwe,  
 And took him by the hand, seint Johan to borwe, 10910  
 And sayde thus : ' Lo, I am youre al,  
 Beth such as I have be to you and schal.'  
 What he answerd, it needeth nat to reherse ;  
 Who can say bet than he, who can do werse ?  
 Whan he hath al wel sayd, than hath he doon.  
 Therfor bihoveth him a ful long spoon,  
 That schal ete with a feend ; thus herd I say.  
 So atte last he moste forth his way,  
 And forth he fleeth, til he cam ther him leste.

10906—as oft happeth so. In the Harl. MS. these words have been omitted by a blunder of the scribe. The lacune is supplied from the Lansd. MS.

10916—a ful long spoon. This singular proverb appears to be of considerable antiquity. It occurs more frequently in the sixteenth century ; among a few proverbs of this date printed in the *Reliq. Antiq.* vol. i, p. 208, one is, " He hath need of a long spoone that eateth with the devill." So in Shakespeare, *Com. of Errors*, iv, 3, " Marry, he must have a long spoon, that must eat with the devil ;" and, *Tempest*, ii, 2, Stephano says, " Mercy ! mercy ! this is a devil, and no monster : I will leave him ; I have no long spoon."



Whan it cam him to purpos for to reste,  
 I trow he hadde thilke text in mynde, 10920  
 That alle thing repeyryng to his kynde  
 Gladeth himself; thus seyn men, as I gesse :  
 Men loven of kynde newefangilnesse,  
 As briddes doon, that men in cage feede.  
 For theigh thou night and day take of hem heede,  
 And straw her cage faire and soft as silk,  
 And geve hem sugre, hony, breed, and mylk,  
 Yet right anoon as that his dore is uppe,  
 He with his feet wil sporne down his cuppe, 10930  
 And to the wode he wil, and wormes ete ;  
 So newefangel be thei of her mete,  
 And loven non leverés of propre kinde ;  
 No gentiles of blood ne may hem binde.  
 So ferde this tercelet, alas the day !  
 Though he were gentil born, and fresh, and gay,  
 And goodly for to see, and humble, and free,  
 He saw upon a time a kite fle,  
 And sodeynly he loved this kite soo,  
 That al his love is clene fro me goo : 10940  
 And hath his trouthe falsed in this wise.  
 Thus bathe the kite my love in hir servise,  
 And I am lorne withoute remedy."

10920—*thilke text*. "Boethius, l. iii, met. 2,  
 Repetunt proprios quæque recursus,  
 Redituque suo singula gaudent.

10930—A leaf or two have unfortunately been lost from the Harleian MS. after this line, and I am obliged to take the remainder of the tale from Tyrwhitt, collated with the Lansd. MS.

10933—*non leverés*—no rations. Tyrwhitt has, loven *novellees*.

And with that worde this faukon gan to cry,  
 And swowneth eft in Canacees barme.  
 Gret was the sorwe for that haukes harme,  
 That Canace and alle hire wommen made;  
 They nysten howe they myght the faukon glade.  
 But Canace hom bereth hir in hir lappe,  
 And softly in plastres gan hir wrappe, 10950  
 Ther as sche with hir bek hadde hurt hir selve.  
 Now can nought Canace bot herbes delve  
 Out of the grounde, and maken salves newe  
 Of herbes precious and fyne of hewe,  
 To helen with this hauk; fro day to night  
 Sche doth hir besines, and al hir might.  
 And by hir beddes heed sche made a mewe,  
 And covered it with veluettes blewe,  
 In signe of trewthe that is in womman seene;  
 And al withoute the mewe is peynted greene, 10960  
 In whiche were peynted alle this false foules,  
 As ben this tideves, tercelettes, and owles;  
 And pies, on hem for to crye and chide,  
 Right for despite were peynted hem byside.  
 Thus lete I Canace hir hauk kepyng.  
 I wil nomore nowe speken of hir rynge,  
 Til it come eft to purpos for to seyn,  
 How that this faukon gat hir love ageyn  
 Repentaunt, as the story telleth us,

---

10958—*blewe*. Blue was the colour of truth.

10963,4—I have followed Tyrwhitt in transposing these two lines, which stand in the Lansd. and other MSS.—

Right for despite were peynted hem bytide,  
 And pies, on hem for to crye and chide.

By mediacioun of Camballus 10970  
 The kinges sone, of which that I yow tolde;  
 But hennesforth I wil my proces holde  
 To speken of adventures, and of batailes,  
 That yit was never herd so grete mervailles.  
 First wil I telle yow of Cambynskan,  
 That in his time many a cité wan :  
 And after wil I speke of Algarsif,  
 How that he wan Theodora to his wif,  
 For whom ful ofte in grete peril he was,  
 Ne had he ben holpen by the hors of bras. 10980  
 And after wil I speke of Camballo,  
 That fought in listes with the bretheren tuo

10977,8 "are also transposed. According to the common arrangement, old Cambuscan is to win *Theodora to his wif*, and we are not told what is to be the object of Algarsif's adventures."—*Tyrwhitt*.

10981—of *Camballo*. "MS. A. reads *Caballo*. But that is not my only reason for suspecting a mistake in this name. It seems clear from the context, that the person here intended is not a *brother*, but a *lover*, of Canace,

Who fought in listes with the brethren tuo  
 For Canace, or that he might hire winne

*The brethren tuo* are, obviously, the two brethren of Canace, who have been mentioned above, Algarsif and Camballo. In MS. Ask. 1, 2, it is, *hir brethren tuo*; which would put the matter out of all doubt. Camballo could not fight with himself. Again, if this Camballo be supposed to be the brother of Canace, and to fight in defence of her with some two brethren, who might be suitors to her, according to Spencer's fiction, he could not properly be said to *winne* his sister, when he only prevented others from winning her. The outline therefore of the unfinished part of this tale, according to my idea, is nearly this; the conclusion of the story of the *Faucon*,

"By mediation of *Camballus*,"

with the help of the *ring*; the conquests of *Cambuscan*; the winning of Theodora by *Algarsif*, with the assistance of the *horse of brass*; and the marriage of Canace to *some knight*, who was first obliged to fight for her with her two brethren; a method of courtship very consonant to the spirit of ancient chivalry."—*Tyrwhitt*.

For Canace, er that he might hir wynne,  
And ther I left I wol ageyn beginne.

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE FRANKLEYNES PROLOGE.

“In faith, Squier, thou hast the wel y-quit  
And gentilly, I preise wel thy wit,”  
Quòd the Frankeleyn, “considering thin youthe,  
So felingly thou spekest, sire, I aloue the  
As to my dome, ther is non that is here,  
Of eloquence that schal be thy pere, 10990  
If that thou live; God geve thee goode chance,  
And in vertue send the continuaunce,  
For of thy speking I have gret deinté.  
I have a sone, and by the Trinité  
It were me lever than twenty pound worth lond,  
Though it right now were fallen in my hond,  
He were a man of swiche discretion,  
As that ye ben: fie on possession,  
But if a man be vertuous withal.

---

10984—In the Lands. MS., in which the Squyeres Tale is followed by the tale of the Wyf of Bathe, the following lines are added as a sort of conclusion to the former:—

Bot I wil here now maake a knotte  
To the time it come next to my lotte;  
For here be felawes behinde an hepe treulye,  
That wolde talke ful beslye,  
And have her spòrte as wele as I,  
And the daie passeth fast certanly.  
Therefore, oste, taketh now goode heede,  
Who schalle next telle, and late him speede.

10985—All from this line to l. 11020 is omitted in the Lansdowne and other MSS., and I have given it chiefly from Tyrwhitt.

I have my sone snibbed, and yet shal, 11000  
For he to vertue listeth not to entend,  
But for to play at dis, and to dispend,  
And lese all that he hath, is his usage ;  
And he had lever talken with a page,  
Than to commune with any gentil wight,  
Ther he might leren gentillesse aright."

"Straw for your gentillesse!" quod our hoste.

"What? Frankeleyn, pardé, sire, wel thou wost,  
That eche of you mote tellen at the lest  
A tale or two, or breken his behest." 11010

"That know I wel, sire," quod the Frankeleyn,

"I pray you haveth me not in disdein,  
Though I to this man speke a word or two."

"Tell on thy tale, withouten wordes mo."

"Gladly, sire hoste," quod he, "I wol obeyo  
Unto your wille; now herkeneth what I seyo;  
I wol you not contrarien in no wise,  
As fer as that my wittes may suffice.  
I pray to God that it may plesen you,  
That wot I wel that it is good y-now. 11020

"This olde gentil Bretons in here daies  
Of divers adventures maden laies,  
Rimyden in her firste Breton tonge;  
Whiche laies with here instrumentes thei songe,  
Other elles reddeden hem for her plesance,

---

11021—*gentil Bretons*. The Breton "laies" here alluded to were very famous in the Middle Ages; but they involve a question in literary history of considerable difficulty, into which we cannot enter on the present occasion.

And one of hem have I in remembrance,  
 Which I schal seie with goode wil as I can.  
 But, sires, because I am a burel man,  
 At my beginnyng first I you beseche  
 Haveth me excused of my rude speche. 11030  
 I lerned never rethorik certeine ;  
 Thinge that I speke, it most be bare and pleine,  
 I slept never on the mount of Parnaso,  
 Ne lerned Marcus, Tullius, ne Cithero.  
 Colours ne know I non, withouten drede,  
 But suche colours as growen in the mede,  
 Or elles suche as men deye with or peinte ;  
 Colours of rethorik ben to me queynte ;  
 My spirit feleth nought of suche matiere.  
 But if you luste my tale schal ye here." 11040

## THE FRANKLEYNES TALE.

IN Armorik, that clepid is Bretaine,  
 Ther was a knyght, that loved and dede his peyne  
 To serven a lady in his beste wise ;  
 And many a labour, many a grete emprise  
 He for his lady wrouht, or sche were wonne :

---

11034—*Marcus, Tullius, ne Cithero*. This is the reading of the Lansdowne MS., and I am inclined to think it may be the right one, Chaucer's intention being to exhibit the Frankeleyne's ignorance of classical literature.

*The Frankeleynes Tale*. The lay, from which Chaucer informs us that he took this tale, appears to be entirely lost; but Bocaccio, who made up his *Decameron* from the popular fabliaux and tales of the time, has preserved a version of this story in that work, *Day. x.*, num. 5, as well as in the fifth book of his *Philocopo*.

For sche was on the fairest under sonne,  
And eke therto com of so hihe kinrede,  
That wele unnethes dorst this knyht for drede  
Tel hir his woo, his peine, and his distresse.  
But at the last, sche for his worthinesse, 11050  
And namely for his meke obeissance,  
Hath suche a pité caught of his penance,  
That prively sche fel of his accorde  
To take him for hir husbonde and hir lorde,  
(Of suche lordschip as men han over hire wyves);  
And, for to lede the more in blisse her lyves,  
Of his fre wil he swore hire as a knyht,  
That never in his wil be day ne nyht  
Ne scholde he upon him take no maistrie  
Ageines hir wille, ne kythe hire jelousye, 11060  
But hire obeie, and folowe hire wille in al,  
As any lover to his lady schal :  
Save that the name of sovereigneté  
That nolde he have for schame of his degré.  
Sche thonketh him, and with ful grete humblesse  
Sche seide ; “ Sir, seththe ye of youre gentillesse  
Ye profer me to have als large a reyne,  
Ne wold nevere God betwix us tweyne,  
As in my gulte, were eyther werre or strif :  
Sir, I wil be youre humble trewe wif; 11070  
Have here my trouthe, til that myn herte bruste.”  
Thus ben they bothe in quiete and in ruste.  
For o thinge, sires, sauflly dar I seie,  
That frendes everyche other motte obeie,  
If thei wil longe holde compaigné.

Love wil nouht buen constreyned by maistré.  
Whan maistré commeth, the god of love anon  
Beteth his winges, and fare wel, he is gon.  
Love is a thinge, as any spirit, fre.  
Wommen of kinde desiren liberté, 11080  
And nouht to be constreined as a thral;  
And so doth men, if I the sothe saie schal.  
Loke who that is most pacient in love,  
He is at his advantage al above.  
Paciens is an hihe vertue certain,  
For it venquisheth, as this clerkes sein,  
Thinges that rigour never sholde atteine.  
For every worde men may nouht chide ne pleine.  
Lerneth to suffer, or elles, so most I gon,  
Yē schul it lerne whether ye wol or non. 11090  
For in this world certain no wight ther is,  
That he ne doth or seyth som time amis.  
Ire, or sikenesse, or constellacioun,  
Wyn, wo, or chaunginge of complexioun,  
Causeth ful oft to don amys or speken.  
On every wronge men maye nouht be wreken;  
After the time most be temperance  
To every wight that can of governance.  
And therfor hath this worthy wise knight  
To liven in ese suffrance hir behight; 11100  
And sche to him ful wisely gan to swere,  
That nevere schold ther be defaute in hire.  
Here may men seen an humble wise accorde:  
Thus hath sche take hire servant and hir lorde,  
Servant in love, and lorde in mariage.



Than was he bothe in lordeschiþe and servage?  
 Servage? nay, but in lordeschip al above,  
 Sethen he hath bothe his lady and his love:  
 His lady certes, and his wif also,  
 The which that law of love accordeth to. 11110  
 And whan he was in this prosperité,  
 Home with his wif he goth to his contré,  
 Nouht fer fro Penmarke, ther his dwellinge was,  
 Wher as he leveth in blisse and in solas.

Who couthe telle, but he had wedded be,  
 The joye, the ese, and the prosperité,  
 That is betwix an housbond and his wif?  
 A yere and more lasteth this blisful lif,  
 Til that this knight, of which I spak of thus,  
 That of Cairrud was cleped Arviragus, 11120  
 Schope him to gon and dwelle a yere or tweyne  
 In Engelond, that cleped eke was Bretayne,  
 To seke in armes worschiþe and honour,  
 (For al his lust he set in suche labour);  
 And dwelleth there tuo yere; the boke seith thus.

Now wil I stint of this Arviragus,  
 And speken I wil of Dorigen his wif,  
 That loveth hire husbond as hire hertes lif.  
 For his absence wepeth sche and siketh,  
 As don this noble wives whan hem liketh; 11130  
 Sche morneth, waketh, wailleth, fasteth, pleyneth;

11113—*Penmarke*. Penmark is on the western coast of Britany, between Brest and L'Orient.

11120—*Cairrud*. So Tyrwhitt gives the name, but he does not inform us where the place is situated. In the *Lansd. MS.* it is called *Kynred*.

Desire of his presence hir so distreineth,  
That al this wide world sche set at nouht.  
Hire frendes, which that knewe hir hevvy thought,  
Comforten hire in al that ever thei may ;  
Thei prechen hire, thei tellen hire nyht and day,  
That causeles sche sleth hir self, alas !  
And every comfort possible in this cas  
They don to hire, with al here businesse,  
And al to make hire leve hire hevynesse. 11140  
By proces, as ye knowen everychone,  
Men mowe so longe graven in a stone,  
Til som figure therinne emprinted be :  
So longe have thei comforted hire, that sche  
Receyved hath, by hope and by resoun,  
The empringe of hire consolacioun,  
Thorugh which hire grete sorwe gan assuage ;  
Sche may not alway duren in suche rage.  
And eke Arviragus, in al this care,  
Hath sent his lettres home of his welfare, 11150  
And that he wolde come hastily ageyn,  
Or elles had this sorwe hire herte sleyn.  
Hire frendes sauh hire sorwe gan to slake,  
And preiden hire on knees, for Goddes sake,  
To come and romen in here companye,  
Away to driven hire derke fantasie :  
And finally sche graunted that request,  
For wel sche sauh that it was for the best.  
Now stode hir castel faste by the see,  
And often with hire frendes walked sche, 11160  
Hir to disporten on the bank an hihe,

Wher as sche many a schip and barge sihe,  
Sailinge her cours, wher as hem liste to go.  
But yit was that a parcel of hir wo,  
For to hir selve ful oft, "alas!" seid sche,  
"Is ther no schip, of so many as I se,  
Wil bringen home my lorde? than were myn herte  
Al warissshed of this bitter peine smerte."

Another time wold sche sitte and thinke,  
And kast hir eye downward fro the brinke; 11170  
But whan sche sawh the grisly rokkes blake,  
For verray fere so wolde hire herte qwake,  
That on hir feet sche myhte nouht hir sustena.  
Than wolde sche sit adoun upon the grene,  
And pitously into the see biholde,  
And seyn right thus, with careful sikes colde.  
"Eterne God, that thorough thy purveance  
Ledest this world by certein governance,  
In idel, as men sein, ye nothinge make.  
But, lord, this grisely fendely rockes blake, 11180  
That semen rather a foule confusioun  
Of werke, than any faire creacioun  
Of suche a parfit wise God and stable,  
Why han ye wrouht this werk unresonable?  
For by this werke, southe, northe, este, ne west,  
Ther nis i fostred man, ne brid, ne best:  
It doth no good, to my wit, but anoyeth.  
See ye nouht, lord, how mankind it destroyeth?  
An hundred thousand bodies of mankinde  
Han rokkes slein, al be they nouht in mynde; 11190  
Which mankinde is so faire parte of thy werke,

Thou madest it like to thyn owen merke,  
 Than, semeth it, ye had a gret cherté  
 Toward mankinde ; but how than may it be,  
 That ye suche menes make it to destroyen ?  
 Which menes doth no good, but ever anoyen.  
 I woot wel, clerkes woln sein as hem lest  
 By argumentz, that al is for the best,  
 Though I ne can the causes nought y-knowe ;  
 But thilke God that maad the wind to blowe, 11200  
 As kepe my lord, this is my conclusioun :  
 To clerkes lete I al disputisoun :  
 But wolde God, that al this rokkes blake  
 Were sonken into helle for his sake !  
 This rokkes slee myn herte for the fere."  
 Thus wold sche say with many a pitous tere.

Hire frendes sawe that it nas no disport,  
 To romen by the see, but discomfort,  
 And schope hem for to pleien somewhere elles.  
 They leden hire by rivers and by welles, 11210  
 And eke in other places delitable ;  
 They dauncen and they pley at ches and tables.  
 So on a day, right in the morwe tide,  
 Unto a gardeyn that was ther beside,  
 In which that they had made her ordinance  
 Of vitaile, and of other purveance,  
 They gon and plaie hem al the longe day :  
 And this was on the sixte morwe of May,  
 Which May had peinted with his softe schoures  
 This gardeyn ful of leves and of floures : 11220  
 And craft of mannes hond so curiously

Arrayed had this gardeyn trewely,  
That never was ther gardeyn of suche pris,  
But if it were the verray paradis.  
The odour of floures and the fresshe siht,  
Wold han y-maked any herte light  
That ever was born, but if to gret sikenesse  
Or to gret sorwe held it in distresse,  
So ful it was of beauté and plesaunce.  
And after dinner gan thay to daunce 11230  
And singe also, sauf Dorigen alone,  
Which made alway hire compleynt and hire mone,  
For sche ne sawh him on the daunce go,  
That was hir housbond, and hire love also:  
But natheles sche moste hir time abide,  
And with good hope lete hire sorwe slide.

Upon this daunce, amonges othere men,  
Daunced a squier before Dorigen,  
That fresscher was and jolier of array,  
As to my dome, than is the moneth of May. 11240  
He singeth and daunseth passing any man,  
That is or was siththe that the world began;  
Therwith he was, if men schuld him describe,  
On of the beste faringe men on live,  
Yonge, strong, riht virtuous, and riche, and wise,  
And wel beloved, and holden in gret prise.  
And schortly, if the soth I tellen schal,  
Unweting of this Dorigen at al,  
This lusty squier, servant to Venus,  
Which that y-cleped was Aurelius, 11250  
Had loved hire best of any creature

Two yere and more, as was his adventure :  
But never dorst he tellen hire his grevance,  
Withouten cuppe he drank al his penance.  
He was dispeired, nothing dorst he seye,  
Sauf in his songes somewhat wolde he wreye  
His woo, as in a general compleyning ;  
He said, he loved, and was beloved nothing.  
Of suche matier made he many layes,  
Songes, compleyntes, roundeleys, virelayes ; 11260  
How that he dorste not his sorwe telle,  
But languissheth as doth a fuyr in helle ;  
And deie he must, he seid, as did Ekko  
For Narcisus, that dorst nought telle hir wo.  
In other maner than ye here me seye,  
Ne dorst he nouht to hire his wo bewreye,  
Sauf that paraventure som time at daunces,  
Ther yonge folk kepen her observaunces,  
It may wel be he loked on hir face  
In suche a wise, as man that axeth grace, 11270  
But nothing wiste sche of his entent.  
Natheles it happed, er they thennes went,  
Because that he was hire neighebour,  
And was a man of worschipe and honour,  
And had y-knowen him oft times yore,  
Thei felle in speche, and forth ay more and more  
Unto his purpos drowh Aurelius ;  
And whan he sawh his time, he seide thus.

---

11264—*Narcisus*. This classic personage was known popularly in the Middle Ages, from the circumstance of his having been made the subject of a French fabliau or metrical story.

“Madame,” quod he, “by God that this world made,  
So that I wist it might your herte glade, 11280  
I wolde that day, that your Arviragus  
Went over see, that I Aurelius  
Had went ther I schold never come agein ;  
For wel I wot my servise is in vein,  
My guerdon nys but bresting of myn herte.  
Madame, reweth upon my peines smerte,  
For with a word ye may me sle or save.  
Here at youre feet God wold that I were grave !  
I ne have as now no leiser more to seye :  
Have mercy, swete, or ye wol do me deye.” 11290

Sche gan to loke upon Aurelius ;

“Is this your wil,” quod sche, “and say ye thus ?  
Never erst,” quod sche, “ne wist I what ye ment :  
But now, Aurelie, I know your entent.  
But thilke God, that gave me soule and lif,  
Ne schal I never ben untrewē wif  
In word ne werk, as fer as I have witte,  
I wil ben his to whom that I am knitte :  
Take this for final answer as of me.”  
But after that in play thus seide sche : 11300  
“Aurelie,” quod sche, “by hihe God above,  
Yit wil I graunte you to be your love,  
(Sin I yow see so pitously compleyne),  
Loke, what day that endelong Breteigne  
Ye remewe al the rokkes, ston by ston,  
That they ne letten schip ne bote to gon,  
I say, whan ye have maad this cost so clene  
Of rokkes, that ther nys no ston y-sene,

Than wol I love yow best of any man,  
Have here my trouthe, in al that ever I can; 11310  
For wel I wot that that schal never betide.  
Let suche folie out of youre herte glide.  
What deynté scholde a man have in his lif,  
For to go love another mannes wif,  
That hath hir body whan that ever him liketh?"  
Aurelius ful often sore siketh;  
"Is ther non other grace in you?" quod he.  
"No, by that lord," quod sche, "that maked me."  
Wo was Aurelie whan that he this herde,  
And with a sorweful herte he thus answerde. 11320  
"Madame," quod he, "this were an impossible.  
Than moste I deie of sodeyn deth horrible."  
And with that word he turned him anon.  
Tho come hir other frendes many on,  
And in the alleyes romed up and down,  
And nothing wist of this conclusioun,  
But sodeynly began to revel newe,  
Til that the brighte sonne had lost his hewe,  
For the orizont had reft the sonne his liht,  
(This is as much to sayn as it was nyht); 11330  
And home thei gon in joye and solas;  
Sauf only wrecche Aurelius, alas!  
He to his hous is gon with sorweful herte.  
He saith, he may not from his deth asterte.  
Him semeth, that he felt his herte colde.  
Up to the heven his handes gan he holde,  
And on his knees bare he set him down,  
And in his raving seid his orisoun.



For verray wo out of his witte he braide,  
He nyst nouht what he spak, but thus he seide; 11340  
With pitous herte his pleynt hath he begonne  
Unto the goddes, and first unto the sonne.  
He seid, "Apollo, God and governour  
Of every plante, herbe, tre, and flour,  
That givest after thy declinacioun  
To eche of hem his tyme and sesoun,  
As that thin herbergh chaungeth low and hihe;  
Lord Phebus, cast thy merciable eye  
On wrecche Aurelie, which that am for-lorne.  
Lo, lord, my lady hath my deth y-sworne 11350  
Withouten gilt, but thy benignité  
Upon my dedly herte have some pité.  
For wel I wot, lord Phebus, if you lest,  
Ye may me helpen, sauf my lady, best.  
Now voucheth sauf, that I may you devise  
How that I may be holpe and in what wise.  
Your blisful suster, Lucina the schene,  
That of the see is chief goddes and qwene:—  
Though Neptunus have deité in the see,  
Yit emperes aboven him is sche: 11360  
Ye knowe wel, lord, that right as hir desire  
Is to be quiked and lihted of your fire,  
For which sche folwith yow ful besily,  
Right so the see desireth naturelly  
To folwen hir, as sche that is goddesse  
Both in the see and rivers more and lesse.  
Wherfor, lord Phebus, this is my request,  
Do this miracle, or do myn herte brest;

That now next at this opposicioun,  
Which in the signe schal be of the Lyoun, 11370  
As preyeth hire so grete a' flood to bringe,  
That five fathome at the lest it overspringe  
The hihest rokke in Armorik Bretaine,  
And let this flod enduren yeres twaine :  
Than certes to my lady may I say,  
Holdeth your hest, the rokkes ben away.  
Lord Phebus, this miracle doth for me;  
Prey hire sche go no faster cours than ye ;  
I sey this, preyeth your suster that sche go  
No faster cours than ye this yeres tuo : 11380  
Than schal sche even be at ful alway,  
And spring-flood lasten bothe night and day.  
And but sche vouchesauf in suche manere  
To graunten me my sovereigne lady dere,  
Prey hir to sinken every rok adoun  
Into hir owen darke regioun  
Under the grounde, ther Pluto duelleth inne,  
Or nevermo schal I my lady wyne.  
Thy temple in Delphos wil I barfote seke ;  
Lord Phebus, se the teres on my cheke, 11390  
And on my peyne have some compassioun."  
And with that word in sorwe he fel adoun,  
And longe time he lay forth in a traunce.  
His brother, which that knew of his penaunce,  
Up cauht him, and to bed he hath him brouht.  
Dispeired in this turment and this thouht,  
Let I this woful creature lye,  
Chese he for me whether he wol leve or deye.

Arviragus with hele and grete honour  
 (As he that was of chevalrie the flour) 11400  
 Is comen home, and other worthy men :  
 O, blisful art thou now, thou Dorigen,  
 That hast thy lusty housbond in thin armes,  
 The fressche knight, the worthy man of armes,  
 That loveth the, as his owen hertes lif :  
 Nothing list him to be imaginatif,  
 If any wight had spoke, while he was oute,  
 To hire of love ; he had of that no doute ;  
 He nouht entendeth to no suche matere,  
 But daunceth, justeth, and maketh mery chere. 11410  
 And thus in joye and blisse I let hem dwelle,  
 And of the sike Aurelius wol I telle.  
 In langour and in turment furius  
 Two yere and more lay wrecche Aurelius,  
 Er any foot on erthe he mighte gon ;  
 Ne comfort in this time had he non,  
 Sauf of his brother, which that was a clerk.  
 He knew of al this wo and al this werk ;  
 For to non other creature certein  
 Of this matere he dorste no word seyn ; 11420  
 Under his brest he bar it more secré,  
 Than ever dede Pamphilus for Galathé.

---

11422—*Pamphilus for Galathé.* The allusion is to a popular mediæval poem commonly known by the name of *Pamphilus*, in which a person of this name gives the history of his amour with Galatea, and which commences with the following lines (conveying the idea alluded to by Chaucer),—

Vulneror et clausum porto sub pectore telum,  
 Crescit et assidue plaga dolorque mihi ;  
 Et ferientis adhuc non audeo dicere nomen,  
 Nec sinit aspectus plaga videre suos.

His brest was hole withouten for to sene,  
But in his herte ay was the arwe kene;  
And wel ye wote that of a sursanure  
In surgerie ful perilous is the cure,  
But men myght touche the arwe or come therby.  
His brother wepeth and weyleth prively,  
Til at the last him fel in remembraunce,  
That whiles he was in Orleaunce in Fraunce, 11430  
As yonge clerkes, that ben likerous  
To reden artes that ben curious,  
Seken in every halke and every herne  
Particulere sciences for to lerne,  
He him remembreth, that upon a day  
At Orleaunce in studie a boke he seye  
Of magik naturel, which his felaw,  
That was that time a bacheler of law,  
Al were he ther to lerne another craft, .  
Had prively upon his desk y-laft; 11440  
Which book spak moche of operaciouns  
Touchinge the eight and twenty mansiouns  
That longen to the mone, and suche folie  
As in oure dayes nys not worth a flye:  
For holy cherches feith, in oure byleve,  
Ne suffreth non illusioun us to greve.  
And whan this boke was in his remembraunce,  
Anon for joye his herte gan to daunce,

---

11430—*Orleaunce in Fraunce*. There was a celebrated and very ancient university at Orleans, which fell into disrepute as the university of Paris became famous, and the rivalry probably led to the imputation that the occult sciences were cultivated at Orleans.

And to him self he seide prively ;  
“ My brother schal be warissshed hastily : 11450  
For I am sikér that ther be sciences,  
By which men maken divers apparences,  
Such as this subtil tregetoures pleyn.  
For oft at festes have I wel herd seyn,  
That tregetoures, within an halle large,  
Have made come in a water and a barge,  
And in the halle rowen up and down.  
Som time hath semed come a grim lyoun ;  
And som time floures springe as in a mede ;  
Som time a vine, and grapes white and rede ; 11460  
Som time a castel al of lime and ston,  
And whan hem liketh voideth it anon :  
Thus semeth it to every mannes sight.  
Now than conclude I thus, if that I might  
At Orleauce som olde felaw finde,  
That hath this mones mansions in mynde,  
Or other magik naturel above,  
He scholde wel make my brother have his love.  
For with an apparence a clerk may make  
To mannes sight, that alle the rokkes blake 11470  
Of Breteigne were y-voided everichon,  
And schippes by the brinke comen and gon,  
And in suche forme endure a day or tuo :  
Than were my brother warissshed of his wo,  
Than most sche nedes holden hire behost,  
Or elles he schal schame hire at the lest.”  
What schold I make a lenger tale of this ?  
Unto his brothers bedde comen he is,

And suche comfort he gaf him, for to gon  
To Orleunce, that he up stert anon, 11480  
And on his way forth ward than is he fare,  
In hope for to ben lissed of his care.  
Whan they were come almost to that cité,  
But if it were a tuo furlong or thre,  
A yonge clerke roming by himself they mette,  
Which that in Latine thriftily hem grette.  
And after that he seyde a wonder thinge ;  
“ I know,” quod he, “ the cause of your comynge :”  
And er they forther any foote went,  
He told hem al that was in her entent. 11490  
This Breton clerk him asked of felawes,  
The which he had y-knowen in olde dawes ;  
And he answerd him that they dede were,  
For which he wept ful often many a tere.  
Doun of his hors Aurelius light anon,  
And forth with this magicien is he gon  
Home to his hous, and made him wel at ese :  
Hem lacked no vitaile that might hem plesse.  
So wel arraied hous as ther was on,  
Aurelius in his lif saw never non. 11500  
He schewed him, er they went to soupere,  
Forestes, parkes ful of wilde dere.  
Ther saw he hartes with her hornes hee,  
The grettest that were ever seen with eye.  
He saw of hem an hundred slain with houndes,  
And som with arwes blede of bitter woundes.  
He saw, whan voided were the wilde dere,  
Thise faukoners upon a faire rivere,

That with hir haukes han the heron slein.  
Tho saw he knyhtes justen in a pleyn. 11510  
And after this he dede him suche plesaunce,  
That he him schewed his lady in a daunce,  
On which him selven daunced, as him thouht.  
And whan this maister, that this magik wrought,  
Saw it was time, he clapped his hondes two,  
And fare wel, al the revel is ago.  
And yet remued they never out of the hous,  
Whiles they sawe alle this sightes mervelous ;  
But in his stodie, ther his bokes be,  
They saten stille, and no wight but they thre. 11520  
To him this maister called than his squyere,  
And sayde him thus, " May we go to soupere?  
Almost an houre it is, I undertake,  
Sin I yow bad our soper for to make,  
Whan that this worthy men wenten with me  
Into my stodie, ther as my bokes be."  
" Sire," quod this squyere, " whan it lyketh you,  
It is al redy, though ye wolde righte now."  
" Go we than soupe," quod he, " as for the best,  
This amorous folk som time moste have rest." 11530  
At after soper fel they in treté  
What somme schold his maisters guerdon be,  
To remue alle the rokkes of Bretaigne,  
And eke fro Gerounde to the mouth of Seine.  
He made it strange, and swore, so God him save,  
Lesse than a thousand pound he wolde nought have,

---

11535—The lacuna in the Harl. MS. ends with this line.

Ne gladly for that somme he wolde not goon.  
Aurilius with blisful hert anoon  
Answerde thus : " Fy on a thousand pound !  
This wyde world, which that men say is round, 11540  
I wold it give, if I were lord of it.  
This bargeyn is ful dryve, for we ben knyht ;  
Ye schal be payed trewly by my trouthe.  
But loketh now, for negligence or slouthe,  
Ye tarie us heer no lenger than to morwe."  
" Nay," quod this clerk, " have her my faith to borwe."  
To bed is goon Aurilius whan him leste,  
And wel neigh al night he had his reste,  
What for his labour, and his hope of blisse,  
His woful hert of penaunce had a lisse. 11550  
Upon the morwe, whan that it was day,  
To Breteign take thei the righte way,  
Aurilius, and this magicien bisyde,  
And ben descendid ther thay wol abyde :  
And this was, as these bookes me remembre,  
The colde frosty seisoun of Decembre.  
Phebus wax old, and hewed lyk latoun,  
That in his hoote declinacioun  
Schon as the burned gold, with stremes bright ;  
But now in Capricorn adoun he light, 11560  
Wher as he schon ful pale, I dar wel sayn.  
The bitter frostes with the sleet and rayn  
Destroyed hath the grene in every yerd.  
Janus sit by the fuyr with double berd,  
And drynketh of his bugle horn the wyn :  
Biforn him stont the braun of toskid swyn,



And *nowel* crieth every lusty man.  
 Aurilius, in al that ever he can,  
 Doth to his maister chier and reverence,  
 And peyneth him to doon his diligence 11570  
 To bringen him out of his peynes smerte,  
 Or with a swerd that he wold slytte his herte.

This subtil clerk such routhe had of this man,  
 That night and day he spedeth him, that he can,  
 To wayte a tyme of his conclusioun ;  
 This is to say, to make illusioun,  
 By such an apparence of jogelrie,  
 (I can no termes of astrologie)  
 That sche and every wight schold wene and saye,  
 That of Breteygn the rokkes were awaye, 11580  
 Or elles they sonken were under the grounde.  
 So atte last he hath a tyme i-founde  
 To make his japes and his wrecchednesse  
 Of such a supersticious cursednesse.  
 His tables Tollitanes forth he brought  
 Ful wel corrected, ne ther lakked nought,  
 Neither his collect, ne his expans yeeres,  
 Neither his rootes, ne his other geeres,  
 As ben his centris, and his argumentis,  
 And his proporcionels convenientis 11590

---

11585—*His tables Tollitanes*. "The Astronomical Tables, composed by order of Alphonso X, king of Castile, about the middle of the xiii<sup>th</sup> century, were called sometimes *Tabulæ Tolstanae*, from their being adapted to the city of Toledo. There is a very elegant copy of them in MS. Harl. 3647. I am not sufficiently skilled in ancient astronomy to add anything to the explanation of the following technical terms, drawn chiefly from those tables, which has been given in the Addit. to *Gloss. Urr.*"—*Tyrwhitt*. See our Glossary, under *EXPANS YEERES*.

For her equaciouns in every thing.  
 And by his thre speeres in his worching,  
 He knew ful wel how fer Allnath was schove  
 Fro the heed of thilk fixe Aries above,  
 That in the fourthe speere considred is.  
 Ful subtilly he calkiled al this.  
 Whan he had founde his firste mancioun,  
 He knew the remenaunt by proporcioun ;  
 And knew the arisyng of this moone wel,  
 And in whos face, and terme, and every del ; 11600  
 And knew ful wel the moones mancioun  
 Acordaunt to his operacioun ;  
 And knew also his other observaunces,  
 For suche illusiouns and suche meschaunces,  
 As hethen folk used in thilke dayes.  
 For which no lenger maketh he delays,  
 But thurgh his magik, for a wike or tweye,  
 It semed that the rokkes were aweye.  
 Aurilius, which yet dispayred is  
 Wher he schal han his love or fare amys, 11610  
 Awayteth night and day on this miracle :  
 And whan he knew that ther was noon obstacle,  
 That voyded were these rokkes everichoon,  
 Doun to his maistres feet he fel anoon,  
 And sayd ; " I wrecched woful Aurilius,  
 Thanke you, lord, and my lady Venus,

---

11592—*thre*. Tyrwhitt, with the MS. Lansd., reads *eighte*.

11598—*Allnath*. The first star in the horns of Aries, whence the first mansion of the moon is named.

11595—*fourthe*. Tyrwhitt, with MS. Lansd., reads *ninthe*.

That me han holpe fro my cares colde."

And to the temple his way forth he hath holde,

Wher as he knew he schold his lady se.

And whan he saugh his tyme, anoon right he 11620

With dredful hert and with ful humble cheere

Salued hath his owne lady deere.

"My soverayn lady," quod this woful man,

"Whom I most drede, and love, as I can,

And lothest were of al this world displese,

Nere it that I for you have such desese,

That I most deye her at youre foot anoon,

Nought wold I telle how me is wo bygoon,

But certes outhur most I dye or pleyne;

Ye sleen me gulteles for verrey peyne. 11630

But of my deth though that ye have no routhe,

Avyseth yow, or that ye breke your trouthe:

Repenteth yow for thilke God above,

Or ye me sleen, bycause that I you love.

For, madame, wel ye woot what ye han hight;

Nat that I chalenge eny thing of right

Of yow, my soverayn lady, but youre grace;

But in a gardyn yonde, at such a place,

Ye wot right wel what ye byhighte me,

And in myn hond your trouthe plighte ye, 11640

To love me best; God woot ye sayde so,

Al be that I unworthy am therto;

Madame, I speke it for thonour of yow,

More than to save myn hertes lif right now:

I have do so as ye comaunded me,

And if ye vouchesauf, ye may go se.

Doth as you list, have youre byheste in mynde,  
For quyk or deed, right ther ye schul me fynde :  
In yow lith al to do me lyve or deye ;  
But wel I wot the rokkes ben aweye.” 11650

He taketh his leve, and sche astoned stood ;  
In alle hir face nas oon drop of blood :  
Sche wende never have be in such a trappe.  
“ Allas !” quod sche, “ that ever this schulde happe !  
For wend I never by possibilité,  
That such a monstre or merveyl mighte be ;  
It is agayns the proces of nature.”

And hom sche goth a sorwful creature,  
For verray fere unnethe may sche go.  
Sche wepeth, wayleth al a day or tuo, 11660  
And swowneth, that it routhe was to see :  
But why it was, to no wight tolde sche,  
For out of toune was goon Arviragus.  
But to hir self sche spak, and sayde thus,  
With face pale, and with ful sorwful chiere,  
In hir compleint, as ye schul after hiere.

“ Allas !” quod sche, “ on the, fortune, I pleyne,  
That unwar wrapped me hast in thy cheyne,  
Fro which tescape, woot I no socour,  
Save oonly deth, or elles dishonour : 11670  
Oon of these tuo bihoveth me to chese.  
But natheles, yet have I lever leese  
My lif, than of my body to have schame,  
Or knowe my selve fals, or lese my name ;  
And with my deth I may be quyt i-wys.  
Hath ther not many a noble wyf, er this,

And many a mayden, slayn hir self, alas !  
 Rather than with her body doon trespas ?  
 Yis certeynly ; lo, stories beren witnes.  
 Whan thritty tirauntz ful of cursednes 11680  
 Hadde slayn Phidon in Athenes atte fest,  
 Thay comaunded his doughtres to arest,  
 And bryngen hem biforn hem in despit  
 Al naked, to fulfille her foule delyt ;  
 And in her fadres blood they made hem daunce  
 Upon the pavymment, God geve hem meschaunce.  
 For which these woful maydens, ful of drede,  
 Rather than they wolde lese her maydenhede,  
 They prively ben stert into a welle,  
 And drenched hem selfen, as the bookes telle. 11690

“ They of Mecene leet enquire and seeke  
 Of Lacidomye fifty maydenes eeke,  
 On which thay wolden doon her leccherie :  
 But was ther noon of al that companye  
 That sche nas slayn, and with a good entente  
 Ches rather for to deye, than to assente  
 To ben oppressed of hir maydenhede.  
 Why schuld I than to deyen ben in drede ?

“ Lo eek the tyraunt Aristoclides,  
 That loved a mayden heet Stimphalides, 11700  
 Whan that hir father slayn was on a night,  
 Unto Dyanes temple goth sche right,  
 And hent the ymage in hir hondes tuo,  
 Fro which ymage wold sche never go,

---

11679—*stories beren wilnes.* They are all taken from *Hieronimus contra Jovinianum*, l. i, c. 39.

No wight might of it hir hondes race,  
Til sche was slayn right in the selve place.  
Now sith that maydens hadde such despit  
To ben defouled with mannes foul delit,  
Wel aught a wyf rather hir self to sle,  
Than be defouled, as it thenketh me. 11710

“What schal I seyn of Hasdrubaldes wyf,  
That at Cartage byraft hir self the lyf?  
For whan sche saugh that Romayns wan the toun,  
Sche took hir children alle, and skipte adoun  
Into the fuyr, and ches rather to deye,  
Than eny Romayn dide hir vilonye.

“Hath nought Lucesse slayn hir self, allas!  
At Rome, whanne sche oppressid was  
Of Tarquyn? for hir thought it was a schame  
To lyven, whan sche hadde lost hir name. 11720

“The seven maydens of Milesie also  
Han slayn hem self for verray drede and wo,  
Rather than folk of Gawle hem schulde oppresse.  
Mo than a thousand stories, as I gesse,  
Couthe I now telle as touching this matiere.

“Whan Habradace was slayn, his wif so deere  
Hir selven slough, and leet hir blood to glyde  
In Habradaces woundes, deepe and wyde;  
And seyde, my body atte leste way  
Ther schal no wight defoulen, if I may. 11730  
What schold I mo ensamples herof sayn?  
Seththen so many han hem selven slayn  
Wel rather than they wolde defouled be,  
I wol conclude that it is best for me

To slen my self than be defouled thus.  
I wol be trewe unto Arviragus,  
Or rather sle my self in som manere,  
As dede Democionis doughter deere,  
Bycause sche wolde nought defouled be.  
O Cedasus, it is ful gret pité 11740  
To reden how thy doughteren dyed, allas !  
That slowe hem self for suche maner caas.  
As gret a pité was it or wel more,  
The Theban mayden, that for Nichonore  
Hir selven slough, right for such maner wo.  
Another Theban mayden dede right so,  
For oon of Macidone had hir oppressed,  
Sche with hire deth hire maydenhede redressed.  
What schal I sayn of Niceratis wif,  
That for such caas biraft hir self hir lyf? 11750  
How trewe eek was to Alcebiades  
His love, that for to dyen rather ches,  
Than for to suffre his body unburied be ?  
Lo, which a wif was Alceste?" quod sche,  
" What saith Omer of good Penolope ?  
Al Grece knoweth of hir chastité.  
Pardi, of Laodomya is writen thus,  
That whan at Troye was slayn Prothesilaus,  
No lenger wol sche lyve after his day.  
The same of noble Porcia telle I may ; 11760  
Withoute Brutus coude sche not lyve,  
To whom sche had al hool hir herte gyve.

---

11761—The Harl. MS. reads this line, apparently incorrectly, *without*  
*Brutes kynde sche myght not lyve.*

The parfyt wyfhod of Artemesye  
 Honoured is thurgh al the Barbarie.  
 O Teuta queen, thy wifly chastité  
 To alle wyves may a mirour be."

Thus playned Dorigen a day or tweye,  
 Purposyng ever that sche wolde deye;  
 But natheles upon the thridde night  
 Hom cam Arviragus, the worthy knight, 11770  
 And asked hir why that sche wept so sore:  
 And sche gan wepe ever lenger the more.  
 "Allas!" quod sche, "that ever was I born!  
 Thus have I sayd," quod sche, "thus have I sworn;"  
 And told him al, as ye han herd biforn:  
 It nedeth nought reherse it you no more.

This housbond with glad chiere in good wise  
 Answerd and sayde, as I schal you devyse.  
 "Is ther aught elles, Dorigen, but this?"  
 "Nay, nay," quod sche, "God me so rede and wis, 11780  
 This is to moche, and it were Goddes wille."  
 "Ye, wyf," quod he, "let slepe that may be stille,  
 It may be wel peraunter yet to day,  
 Ye schal your trouthe holden, by my fay.  
 For God so wisly have mercy on me,  
 I hadde wel lever i-stekid for to be,  
 For verray love which that I to you have,

11765—*Teuta*. The Harl. MS. reads *O Thena*.

11766—*To alle wives*. "After this verse the two following are found in several MSS.,—

The same thing I say of Bilia,  
 Of Rhodogone and of Valeria.

But as they are wanting in MSS. A. C. 1 Ask. 1, 2, HA. I was not unwilling to leave them out."—*Tyrwhill*.



But if ye scholde your trouthe kepe and save.  
 Trouthe is the heighest thing that men may kepe."  
 But with that word he gan anoon to wepe, 11790  
 And sayde, "I yow forbede up peyne of deth,  
 That never whil ye lasteth lyf or breth,  
 To no wight telle you of this aventure.  
 As I may best I wil my woo endure.  
 Ne make no contenaunce of hevynesse,  
 That folk of you may deme harm or gesse."  
 And forth he cleped a squyer and a mayde.  
 "Go forth anoon with Dorigen," he sayde,  
 "And bryngeth hir to such a place anoon."  
 Thay take her leve, and on her wey they gon: 11800  
 But thay ne wiste why sche thider went,  
 He nolde no wight tellen his entent.  
 This squyer, which that hight Aurilius,  
 On Dorigen that was so ameraus,  
 Of aventure happed hire to mete  
 Amyd the toun, right in the quyke strete;  
 As sche was boun to goon the wey forth-right  
 Toward the gardyn, ther as sche had hight.

---

11802—*He nolde.* "After this verse Ed. Ca. 2 has the six following:  
 Peraventure an hepe of you I wis,  
 Will holden him a lewed man in this,  
 That he woll put his wife in jeopardie.  
 Herkneþ the tale, or ye upon him crie.  
 Sche may have better fortune than you someth;  
 And whan that ye han herde the tale demeth.

These lines are more in the style and manner of Chaucer than interpolations generally are; but as I do not remember to have found them in any MS. I could not receive them into the text. I think too, that, if they were written by him, he would probably, upon more mature consideration, have suppressed them, as unnecessarily anticipating the catastrophe of the tale."—*Tyrwhitt.*

And he was to the gardyn-ward also ;  
For wel he spyed whan sche wolde go 11810  
Out of hir hous, to eny maner place.  
But thus thay mette of adventure or grace,  
And he salueth hir with glad entent,  
And askith hire whider-ward sche went.  
And sche answered, half as sche were mad,  
“ Unto the gardyn, as myn housbond bad,  
My trouthe for to holde, allas ! allas ! ”  
Aurilius gan wondren on this caas,  
And in his hert had gret compassioun  
Of hire, and of hir lamentacioun, 11820  
And of Arviragus the worthy knight,  
That bad hir hold al that sche hadde hight,  
So loth him was his wif schuld breke hir trouthe.  
And in his hert he caught of this gret routhe,  
Consideryng the best on every syde,  
That fro his lust yet were him lever abyde,  
Than doon so high a cheerlissch wrecchednesse  
Agayns fraunchis of alle gentilesce ;  
For which in fewe wordes sayd he thus.  
“ Madame, saith to your lord Arviragus, 11830  
That sith I se his grete gentilesse  
To you, and eek I se wel your distresse,  
That him were lever have schame (and that were routhe)  
Than ye to me schulde breke youre trouthe,  
I have wel lever ever to suffre woo,  
Than I departe the love bytwix yow tuo,  
I yow relese, madame, into your hond  
Quyrt every seurement and every bond,

That ye han maad to me as herbiforn,  
 Sith thilke tyme which that ye were born. 11840  
 My trouthe I plight, I schal yow never repreve  
 Of no byhest, and her I take my leve,  
 As of the trewest and the beste wif  
 That ever yit I knew in al my lyf.  
 But every wyf be war of hir byhest ;  
 On Dorigen remembreth atte lest.  
 Thus can a squyer doon a gentil dede,  
 As wel as can a knyght, withouten drede."

Sche thanketh him upon hir knees al bare,  
 And hoom unto hir housbond is sche fare, 11850  
 And told him al, as ye han herd me sayd :  
 And, be ye siker, he was so wel apayd,  
 That it were impossible me to write.  
 What schuld I lenger of this caas endite ?  
 Arviragus and Dorigen his wif  
 In sovereyn blisse leden forth here lyf,  
 Never eft ne was ther anger hem bytwen ;  
 He cherisscheth hir as though sche were a queen,  
 And sche was to him trewe for evermore :  
 Of these tuo folk ye gete of me nomore. 11860

Aurilius, that his cost hath al for-lorn,  
 Curseth the tyme that ever he was born.  
 "Allas !" quod he, "allas, that I byhight  
 Of pured gold a thousand pound of wight  
 Unto this philosophre ! how schal I doo ?  
 I se no more, but that I am for-doo.  
 Myn heritage moot I needes selle,  
 And ben a begger, her may I not duello,

And schamen al my kynrede in this place,  
But I of him may gete better grace. 11870

But natheles I wol of him assay  
At certeyn dayes yeer by yer to pay,  
And thanke him of his grete curtesye.  
My trouthe wol I kepe, I wol not lye."  
With herte soor he goth unto his cofre,  
And brougte gold unto this philosophre,  
The value of fyf hundred pound, I gesse,  
And him bysecheth of his gentilesce  
To graunte him dayes of the remenaunt;  
And sayde: "Maister, I dar wel make avaunt, 11880  
I fayled never of my trouthe as yit.

For sikerly my dettes schal be quyrt  
Towardes yow, how so that ever I fare  
To goon and begge in my kurtill bare:  
But wolde ye vouchesauf upon seurté  
Tuo yer or thre for to respite me,  
Than were I wel, for elles most I selle  
Myn heritage, ther is nomore to telle,"

This Philosophre sobrelly answerde,  
And seyde thus, whan he these wordes herde; 11890  
"Have I not holden covenant unto the?"

"Yis certes, wel and trewely," quod he.

"Hastow nought had thy lady as the liketh?"

"No, no," quod he, and sorwfully he siketh.

"What was the cause? tel me, if thou can."

Aurilius his tale anon bygan,

And told him al as ye han herd bifore,

It needeth nat to you reherse it more.

He sayde, Arviragus of gentillesse  
 Had lever dye in sorwe and in distresse, 11900  
 Than that his wyf were of hir trouthe fals.  
 The sorwe of Dorigen he tolde him als,  
 How loth hir was to ben a wikked wyf,  
 And that sche lever had han lost hir lyf;  
 And that hir trouthe sche swor thurgh innocence;  
 Sche never erst hadde herd speke of apparence :  
 " That made me han of hir so gret pyté.  
 And right as frely as he sente hir to me,  
 As frely sent I hir to him agayn :  
 This is al and som, ther is no more to sayn." 11910  
 The Philosophre answerde : " Leve brother,  
 Everich of yow dede gentilly to other :  
 Thow art a squyer, and he is knight,  
 But God forbede, for his blisful might,  
 But if a clerk couthe doon as gentil dede  
 As wel as eny of you, it is no drede.  
 Sire, I relesse the thy thousand pound,  
 As thou right now were crope out of the ground,  
 Ne never er now ne haddest knowen me.  
 For, sire, I wil not take a peny of the 11920  
 For al my craft, ne nought for al my travayle :  
 Thou hast y-payed wel for my vitayle.  
 It is y-nough, and far wel, have good day."  
 And took his hors, and forth he goth his way.  
 Lordynges, this questioun wolde I axe now,

---

11908—*And right as.* MS. Harl. reads this and the next line,—

Bycause hir housebond sente hir to me,  
 And right as frely sent I hir to him agcyn.

Which was the moste free, as thinketh yow?  
 Now telleth me, er that I ferther wende.  
 I can no more, my tale is at an ende.

## THE SECONDE NONNES TALE.

THE minister and the norice unto vices,  
 Which that men clepe in Englisch ydelnesse, 11930  
 The porter at the gates is of delicis;  
 To eschiewe, and by her contrary hire oppresse,  
 That is to say, by leful besynesse,  
 Wel oughte we to do al oure entente,  
 Lest that the fend thurgh ydelnesse us hente.  
 For he that with his thousand cordes slye  
 Continuelly us wayteth to byclappe,  
 Whan he may man in ydelnes espye,  
 He can so lightly cacche him in his trappe,  
 Til that a man be hent right by the lappe, 11940  
 He is nought ware the fend hath him in honde:  
 Wel oughte we wirche, and ydelnes withstonde.

---

11926—*Which was the moste free.* Tyrwhitt remarks that, The same question is stated in the conclusion of Boccace's tale. *Philos.* 1, v. Dubitasi ora qual di costoro fusse maggior liberalità, &c. The queen determines in favour of the husband." It may be further observed that this conclusion of the story gives it the character of those questions which were usually debated in the mediæval courts of love.

*The Secounde Nonnes Tale.* This is almost a literal translation from the life of St. Cecilia in the *Legenda Aurea*. It appears to have been first composed by Chaucer as a separate work, and is enumerated as such in the *Legende of Good Women*, l. 426. In two manuscripts quoted by Tyrwhitt, some lines, evidently not by Chaucer, are prefixed as an Introduction. It may be added that here the Harleian MS. differs from Tyrwhitt's edition in the arrangement of the Tales, which renders it impossible to continue my original intention of preserving Tyrwhitt's numbering of the lines.

And though men dredde never for to deye,  
 Yet seen men wel by resoun douteles,  
 That ydelnes is rote of sloggardye,  
 Of which ther cometh never good encres ;  
 And sin that slouth he holdeth in a lees,  
 Oonly to sleep, and for to ete and drynke,  
 And to devoure al that other swynke.

And for to put us from such ydelnes, 11950  
 That cause is of so gret confusioun,  
 I have her doon my faithful busynes  
 After the legende in translacioun  
 Right of this glorious lif and passioun,  
 Thou with thi garlond, wrought with rose and lylle,  
 The mene I, mayde and martir Cecilie.

And thou, that flour of virgines art alle,  
 Of whom that Bernard lust so wel to write,  
 To the at my bygynnyng first I calle :  
 Thou comfort of us wrecches, do me endite 11960  
 Thy maydenes deth, that wan thurgh hire merite  
 Theternal lif, and of the feend victorie,  
 As man may after reden in hir storie.

Thou mayde and moder, doughter of thi sone,  
 Thow welle of mercy, synful soules cure,  
 In whom that God of bountés chees to wone;  
 Thou humble and heyh over every creature,  
 Thow nobelest so ferforth oure nature,  
 That no disdeyn the maker had of kynde  
 His sone in blood and fleish to clothe and wynde. 11970

---

11958—*Bernard*. Some of the most eloquent of the sermons of St. Bernard are on the nativity and assumption of the Virgin.

Withinne the cloyster of thi blisful sydes,  
 Took mannes schap the eternal love and pees,  
 That of the trine compas lord and guyde is,  
 Whom erthe, and see, and heven out of relees  
 Ay herien; and thou, virgine wemmeles,  
 Bar of thy body, and dwellest mayden pure,  
 The creatour of every creature.

Assembled is in the magnificence  
 With mercy, goodnes, and with such pitee,  
 That thou, that art the soun of excellence, 11980  
 Not oonly helpist hem that prayen the,  
 But often tyme of thy benignité  
 Ful frely, er that men thin help biseche,  
 Thou gost biforn, and art her lyfes leche.

Now help, thou meke and blisful faire mayde,  
 Me flemed wrecche, in this desert of galle;  
 Thenk on the womman Cananee, that sayde  
 That whelpes ete some of the crommes alle  
 That from her lordes table ben i-falle;  
 And though that I, unworthy sone of Eve, 11990  
 Be synful, yet accepte my bileve.

And for that faith is deth withouten werkis,  
 So for to werken give we witt and space,  
 That I be quit fro thennes that most derk is;  
 O thou, that art so fair and ful of grace,  
 Be myn advocat in that hihe place,  
 Ther as withouten ende is songe Osanne,  
 Thou Cristes moder, doughter deere of Anne.

---

11987—the womman Cananee. The Harl. MS. reads erroneously *the womman Canare*.



And of thi light my soule in prisoun light,  
 That troubled is by the contagioun 12000  
 Of my body, and also by the wight  
 Of everich lust and fals affeccoun :  
 O heven of refuyt, o salvacioun  
 Of hem that ben in sorwe and in destresse,  
 Now help, for to my werk I wil me dresse.

Yet pray I you that reden that I write,  
 Forgeve me, that I doo no diligence  
 This ilke story subtilly to endite.  
 For bothe have I the wordes and sentence  
 Of him, that at the seintes reverence 12010  
 The story wroot, and folwen hir legende,  
 And pray yow that ye wol my werk amende.

First wol I yow the name of seint Cecilie  
 Expoune, as men may in hir story se :  
 It is to say on Englisch, hevenes lillie,  
 For pure chastenesse of virginité,  
 Or for sche wnesse hadde of honesté  
 And grene of conscience, and of good fame  
 The soote savour, lillie was hir name.

Or Cecile is to say, the way of blynde, 12020  
 For sche ensample was by way of techyng ;  
 Or elles Cecily, as I writen fynde,  
 Is joyned by a maner conjoynyng  
 Of heven and *lya*, and here in figuryng  
 The heven is sette for thought of holynesse,

---

12013—*the name*. These punning explanations of proper names were very fashionable in the Middle Ages. In the present instance, they are translated directly from the prologue to the Latin legend.

And *lya*, for hir lastyng besynesse.

Cecili may eek be seyð in this manere,  
Wantyng of blyndnes, for hir grete light  
Of sapience, and of thilke thewes cleere.  
Or elles lo, this maydenes name bright 12030  
Of heven and *los* comes, for which by right  
Men might hir wel the heven of peple calle,  
Ensamble of goode and wise werkes alle :

For *leos* peple in Englissh is to say ;  
And right as men may in the heven see  
The sonne and moone, and sterres every way,  
Right so men gostly, in this mayden free  
Seen of faith the magnanimité,  
And eek the clernes hool of sapience,  
And sondry werkes, bright of excellence. 12040

And right so as these filosofres wryte,  
That heven is swyft and round, and eek brennynge,  
Right so was faire Cecily the whyte  
Ful swyft and besy ever in good werkyng,  
And round and hool in good perseverynge,  
And brennyng ever in charité ful bright :  
Now have I yow declared what sche hight.

This mayden bright Cecilie, as hir lyf saith,  
Was comen of Romainys and of noble kynde,  
And from hir cradel fostred in the faith 12050  
Of Crist, and bar his Gospel in hir mynde ;  
Sche never cessed, as I writen fynde,  
Of hire prayer, and God to love and drede,  
Byseching him to kepe hir maydenhede.

And whan this mayde schuld unto a man

Among the seyntes buriels lotynge :  
 And he anon withoute tarynge  
 Did his message, and whan that he it tolde,  
 Urban for joye his handes gan upholde.

The teres from his eyghen let he falle ;  
 " Almyghty Lord, o Jhesu Crist," quod he,  
 " Sower of chaste counseil, herde of us alle,      12120  
 The fruyt of thilke seed of chastité  
 That thou hast sowe in Cecilie, tak to the :  
 Loo, like a busy bee withouten gyle  
 The serveth ay thin owne thral Cecile.

" For thilke spouse, that sche took right now  
 Ful lyk a fers lyoun, sche sendeth here  
 As meek as ever was eny lamb to yow."  
 And with that word anon ther gan appere  
 An old man, clad in white clothes clere,  
 That had a book with lettres of gold in honde,      12130  
 And gan to-forne Valirian to stonde.

Valirian, as deed, fyl down for drede,  
 Whan he him say ; and he him up hente tho,  
 And on his book right thus he gan to rede ;  
 " On Lord, o feith, oon God withouten mo,  
 On Cristendom. and oon fader of alle also,  
 Aboven alle, and over alle every where :"  
 This wordes al with golde writen were.

Whan this was red, than seide this olde man,

12114—*lotynge*. The Latin legend has, *inter sepulchra martyrum latitantem invenit*.

12138—12144. These lines are omitted in MS. Harl. by the inadvertence of the scribe.

“Levest thou this thing or no? say ye or naye.” 12140

“I leve al this thing,” quod Valirian,

“For sother thing than this, I dare wel saye,

Under the heven no wight thenken maye.”

Tho vanyshed the old man, he nyste where,

And pope Urban him cristened right there.

Valirian goth home, and fint Cecilie

Withinne his chambre with an aungel stonde :

This aungel had of roses and of lilie

Corounes tuo, the which he bar in honde.

And first to Cecilie, as I understonde, 12150

He gaf that oon, and after can he take

That other to Valirian hir make.

“With body clene, and with unwemmed thought,

Kepeth ay wel these corouns tuo,” quod he,

“Fro paradys to you I have hem brought,

Ne never moo ne schul they roten be,

Ne leese here swoote savour, trusteth me,

Ne never wight schal seen hem with his ye,

But he be chast, and hate vilonye.

“And thou Valirian, for thou so soone 12160

Assentedist to good counseil, also

Say what the list, and thou schalt have thi boone.”

“I have a brother,” quod Valirian tho,

“That in this world I love no man so,

I pray yow that my brother may have grace

To knowe the trouthe, as I doo in this place.”

The aungel sayde, “God liketh thy request,

And bothe with the palme of martirdom

Ye schullen come unto his blisful feste."

And with that word, Tiburce his brother com. 12170

And whan that he the savour undernom,  
Which that the roses and the lilies cast,  
Withinne his hert he gan to wondre fast.

And sayde, " I wondre this tyme of the yer,  
Whennes this soote savour cometh so  
Of rose and lilies, that I smelle her ;  
For though I had hem in myn hondes tuo,  
The savour might in me no depper go :  
The swete smel, that in myn hert I fynde,  
Hath chaunged me al in another kynde." 12180

Valirian sayd, " Tuo corouns have we,  
Snow-whyte and rose-reed, that schinen cleere,  
Whiche that thine eyghen han no might to see :  
And as thou smellest hem thurgh my prayere,  
So schalt thou seen hem, lieve brothere deere,  
If it so be thou wilt withouten slouthe  
Bilieven aright, and knowen verray trouthe."

Tyburce answerde, " Says thou thus to me  
In sothenes, or in drem I herkne this ?"  
" In dremes," quod Valirian, " han we be 12190  
Unto this tyme, brother myn, i-wys :  
But now at erst in trouthe oure duellyng is."  
" How wost thou this," quod Tyburce, " and in what wise ?"

12169—*blisful feste*. This is the reading of the Harl. and Lansd. MSS. The words of the Latin legend are,—*Cui angelus, Placet Domino petitio tua, et ambo cum palma martyrii ad Dominum venietis*. Tyrwhitt reads, *rest*.

Quod Valirian, "That schal I the devyse.

"The aungel of God hath me trouthe y-taught,  
Which thou schalt seen, if that thou wilt reneye  
The ydols, and be clene, and elles nought."

And of the miracles of these corones tweye

Seynt Ambrose in his prefas list to seye ;

Solempnely this noble doctour deere 12200

Comendeth it, and saith in this maneere.

"The palme of martirdom for to receyve,  
Seynt Cecilie, fulfilled of Goddes gifte,  
The world and eek hir chamber gan sche weyve ;  
Witnes Tyburces and Cecilies shrifte,  
To whiche God of his bounté wolde schifte  
Corounes tuo, of floures wel smellynge,  
And made his aungel home the croune brynge."

The mayde hath brought this men to blisse above ;  
The world hath wist what it is worth certeyn, 12210  
Devocioun of chastité to love.

Tho schewed him Cecilie al open and pleyn,  
That alle ydoles nys but thing in veyn ;  
For thay ben doumbe, and therto they ben deve,  
And chargeth him his ydoles for to leve.

"Who so that troweth not this, a best he is,"  
Quod this Tyburce, "if that I schal not lye."

And sche gan kisse his brest that herde this,

And was ful glad he couthe trouthe espye :

"This day I take the for myn allye," 12220

---

12198. The lines which follow, and which interrupt the narration very awkwardly, are translated almost literally from the Latin legend, in which Tyrwhitt supposes them to have been originally an interpolation.

Sayde this blisful faire mayde deere ;  
And after that sche sayde as ye may heere.

“ Lo, right so as the love of Crist,” quod sche,  
“ Made me thy brotheres wyf, right in that wyse  
Anoon for myn allye heer take I the,  
Sin that thou wilt thyne ydoles despise.  
Go with thi brother now and the baptise,  
And make the clene, so that thou mowe biholde  
The aungeles face, of which thy brother tolde.”

Tyburce answerde, and sayde, “ Brother dere,<sup>12230</sup>  
First tel me whider I schal, and to what man.”  
“ To whom?” quod he, “ com forth with good cheere,  
I wol the lede unto the pope Urban.”  
“ Til Urban? brother myn Valirian,”  
Quod Tiburce, “ wilt thou me thider lede?  
Me thenketh that it were a wonder dede.

“ Ne menist thou nat Urban,” quod he tho,  
“ That is so ofte dampned to the deed,  
And woneth in halkes alway to and fro,  
And dar nought oones putte forth his heed?      12240  
Men schold him brenne in a fuyr so reed,  
If he were founde, or if men might him spyre,  
And we also to bere him compaigne.

“ And whil we seken thilke divinité,  
That is i-hyd in heven prively,  
Algate i-brent in this world schuld we be.”  
To whom Cecilie answerde boldely,

12237—*Ne menist.* De illo Urbano dicis, qui totiens damnatus est, et adhuc in latebris commoratur?—*Lal. Leg.*

12247—*boldely.* The Harl. MS. reads, *boldly*.

Men mighten dreden wel and skilfully  
 This lyf to lese, myn oughne dere brother,  
 If this were lyvyng oonly and noon other. 12250

“But ther is better lif in other place,  
 That never schal be lost, ne drede the nought:  
 Which Goddes sone us tolde thurgh his grace,  
 That fadres sone that alle thing hath wrought;  
 And al that wrought is with a skilful thought,  
 The gost, that from the fader gan procede,  
 Hath sowled hem withouten eny drede.

“By word and miracle hihe Goddes sone,  
 Whan he was in this world, declared heere,  
 That ther was other lyf ther men may wone.” 12260  
 To whom answerde Tyburce, “O suster deere,  
 Ne seydest thou right now in this manere,  
 Ther nys but oon God, o Lord, in sothfastnesse,  
 And now of thre how maystow bere witnesse?”

“That schal I telle,” quod sche, “er that I go.  
 Right as a man hath sapiences thre,  
 Memorie, engin, and intellect also,  
 So in oo being in divinité  
 Thre persones may ther right wel be.”  
 Tho gan sche him ful besily to preche 12270  
 Of Cristes come, and of his peynes teche,

12266—*sapiences thre*. In the original Latin it is, Respondit Cecilia, Sicut in una hominis sapientia sunt tria, scilicet ingenium, memoria, et intellectus, sic in una divinitatis essentia tres personæ esse possent. In l. 15807, the Harl. MS reads erroneously *eyen* for *engin*.

12271—*come*. So the Harl. MS., correctly. In the Lat. legend it is, Tunc cepit ei de *adventu* filii Dei et passione prædicare. Tyrwhitt reads *sonde*.



And many pointes of his passioun;  
How Goddes sone in this world was withholde  
To doon mankynde pleyn remissioun,  
That was i-bounde in synne and cares colde.  
Al this thing sche unto Tyburce tolde,  
And after this Tiburce in good entente,  
With Valirian to pope Urban he wente,  
That thanked God, and with glad hert and light  
He cristened him, and made him in that place 12280  
Parfyt in his lernynge, Goddes knyght.  
And after this Tiburce gat such grace,  
That every day he say in tyme and space  
The aungel of God, and every maner boone  
That he God asked, it was sped ful soone.

It were ful hard by ordre for to sayne  
How many wondres Jesus for hem wroughte;  
But atte last, to tellen schort and playne,  
The sergeantz of the toun of Rome hem soughte,  
And hem byforn Almache the prefect broughte, 12290  
Which hem apposed, and knew alle here entente,  
And to the ymage of Jubiter hem sente;

And saide, "Who so wil not sacrifice,  
Swope of his heved, this my sentence heere."  
Anoon these martires, that I you devyse,  
Oon Maximus, that was an officere  
Of the prefectes, and his corniculere,  
Hem hent, and whan he forth the seyntes ladde,  
Him self he wept for pité that he hadde.

Whan Maximus had herd the seintes lore, 12300  
He gat him of his tormentoures leve,  
And bad hem to his hous withouten more ;  
And with her preching, er that it were eve,  
Thay gonne fro the tormentoures to reve,  
And fro Maxime, and fro his folk echoone,  
The false faith, to trowe in God alloone.

Cecilie cam, whan it was waxen night,  
With prestis, that hem cristenid alle in feere ;  
And afterward, whan day was waxen light,  
Cecilie hem sayde with a ful stedefast chere ; 12310  
“ Now, Cristes owne knyghtes leef and deere,  
Cast al away the werkes of derknes,  
And armith you in armur of brightnes.

“ Ye han forsothe y-doon a greet batayle ;  
Youre cours is doon, youre faith han ye conserved ;  
Goth to the coroun of lyf that may not fayle ;  
The rightful jugge, which that ye han served,  
Schal geve it yow, as ye han it deserved.”  
And whan this thing was sayd, as I devyse,  
Men ladde hem forth to doon the sacrificise, 12320

But whan they were to the place y-brought,  
To telle schortly the conclusioun,  
They nolde encense, ne sacrifice right nought,  
But on her knees they setten hem adoun,  
With humble hert and sad devocioun,  
And leften bothe her heedes in that place ;  
Here soules wenten to the king of grace.

This Maximus, that say this thing betyde,  
 With pitous teeres tolde it anoon right,  
 That he here soules saugh to heven glyde 12330  
 With aungels, ful of clernes and of light;  
 And with his word converted many a wight.  
 For which Almachius dede him so bete,  
 With whippes of leed, til he his lif gan lete.

Cecilie him took, and buried him anoon  
 By Tiburce and Valirian softly,  
 Withinne hire berieng place, under the stoon.  
 And after this Almachius hastily  
 Bad his ministres fecchen openly  
 Cecilie, so that sche might in his presence 12340  
 Doon sacrifice, and Jubiter encense.

But they, converted at hir wise lore,  
 Wepten ful sore, and gaven ful credence  
 Unto hir word, and cryden more and more;  
 "Crist, Goddes sone, withouten difference,  
 Is verray God, this is al oure sentence,  
 That hath so good a servaunt him to serve:  
 Thus with oon vois we trowen though we sterve."

Almachius, that herd of this doynge,  
 Bad fecchen Cecilie, that he might hir se: 12350  
 And alther-first, lo, this was his axinge;  
 "What maner womman art thou?" quod he.  
 "I am a gentil-womman born," quod sche.  
 "I axe the," quod he, "though the it greve,

---

12333—*so bete*. The Lansd. MS has *so to-bete*, and Tyrwhitt adopts *dede him to-bete*.

12334.—*whippes of leed*. *Eum plumbatis tamdiu credi fecit quousque spiritum excussit*.—*Lat. Leg.*

Of thi religioun and of thi byleve."

"Ye han bygonne your questioun folily,"  
Quod sche, "that wolden tuo answers conclude  
In oo demaunde? ye axen lewedly."

Almache answerde to that similitude,

"Of whens cometh thin answering so rude?" 12360

"Of whens?" quod sche, whan she was i-freynded,

"Of conscience, and of good faith unfeyned."

Almachius sayde, "Takest thou noon heede

Of my power?" and sche answerde him this;

"Your might," quod sche, "ful litel is to drede;

For every mortal mannes power nys

But lyk a bladder ful of wynd i-wis:

For with a nedeles poynt, whan it is blowe,

May al the best of it be layd ful lowe."

"Ful wrongfully bygonnest thou," quod he, 12370

"And yet in wrong is thy perseveraunce:

Wostow nought how oure mighty princes fre

Han thus comaunded and maad ordinaunce,

That every cristen wight schal han penaunce;

But if that he his Cristendom withseye,

And goon al quyt, if he wil it reneye?"

"Your princes erre, as youre nobleye doth,"

Quod tho Cecilie; "and with a wood sentence

Ye make us gulty, and it is nought soth:

For ye that knowen wel oure innocence, 12380

Forasmoche as we doon ay reverence

To Crist, and for we bere a Cristen name,

Ye putten on us a crim and eek a blame.

"But we that knowen thilke name so

For vertuous, we may it not withseye."  
Almache sayde, "Cheese oon of these tuo,  
Do sacrifice or Cristendom reneye,  
That thou mow now eschafen by that weye."  
At which the holy blisful faire mayde  
Gan for to laughe, and to the jugge sayde:

12390

"O jugge confus in this nyceté,  
Wilt thou that I refuse innocence?  
To make me a wikked wight," quod sche,  
"Lo, he dissimuleth heer in audience,  
He starith and woodith in his advertence."  
To whom Almachius sayde, "Unsely wrecche,  
Ne wostow nought how fer my might may strecche?

"Han nought our mighty princes to me y-given,  
Ye, bothe power and eek auctorité  
To maken folk to deyen or to lyven?

12400

Why spekestow so proudly than to me?"  
"I speke not but stedefastly," quod sche,  
"Nought proudly, for I say, as for my syde,  
We haten deedly thilke vice of pryde.

"And if thou drede nought a soth to heere,  
Than wol I schewe al openly by right,  
That thou hast maad a ful greet lesyng heere.  
Thou saist, thy princes han i-give the might  
Bothe for to sleen and eek to quike a wight,  
Thou that ne maist but oonly lif byreve,  
Thou hast noon other power ne no leve.

12410

"But thou maist sayn, thi princes han the maked  
Minister of deth: for if thou speke of moo,  
Thow liest; for thy power is ful naked."

“Do way thy lewednes,” sayd Almachius tho,  
 “And sacrifice to oure goddes, er thou go.  
 I recche nought what wrong that thou me profre,  
 For I can suffre it as a philosophre.

“But thilke wronges may I not endure,  
 That thou spekis of oure goddis her,” quod he. 12420  
 Cecilie answered, “O nice creature,  
 Thou saydest no word sins thou spak to me,  
 That I ne knew therwith thy niceté,  
 And that thou were in every maner wise  
 A lewed officer, a vein justise.

“Ther lakketh no thing to thin outer eyen  
 That thou art blynde; for thing that we seen alle  
 That it is stoon, that men may wel aspien,  
 That ilke stoon a god thou wilt it calle.  
 I rede the, let thin hond upon it falle, 12430  
 And tast it wel, and stoon thou schalt it fynde,  
 Sith that thou seest not with thin eyghen blynde.

“It is a schame that the poeple schal  
 So scorne the, and laughe at thi folye:  
 For comunly men woot it wel over al,  
 That mighty God is in his heven hye;  
 And these ymages, wel thou mayst espie,  
 To the ne to hem self may nought profyte,  
 For in effect they ben nought worth a myte.”

Thise wordes and such other sayde sche; 12440  
 And he wax wroth, and bad men schold hir lede  
 Hom to hir hous; “And in hir hous,” quod he,

" Brenne hir right in a bath of flammes rede."

And as he bad, right so was doon the dede ;  
For in a bath thay gonne hir faste schetten,  
And nyght and day greet fuyr they under betten.

The longe night, and eek a day also,  
For al the fuyr, and eek the bathes hete,  
Sche sat al cold, and felte of it no woo,  
It made hir not oon drope for to swete. 12450  
But in that bath hir lif sche moste lete ;  
For he Almachius, with ful wikke entente,  
To sleen hir in the bath his sondes sente.

Thre strokes in the nek he smot hir tho  
The tormentour, but for no maner chaunce  
He might nought smyte hir faire necke a-tuo.  
And for ther was that tyme an ordinaunce  
That no man scholde do man such penaunce  
The ferthe strok to smyten, softre or sore,  
This tormentour ne dorste do no more ; 12460

But half deed, with hir nekke corven there  
He laft hir lye, and on his way he went.  
The cristen folk, which that about hir were,  
With scheetes han the blood ful faire y-hent :  
Thre dayes lyved sche in this torment,  
And never cessed hem the faith to teche,  
That sche had fostred hem, sche gan to preche.

And hem sche gaf hir moebles and hir thing,  
And to the pope Urban bytook hem tho,  
And sayd, " I axe this of heven kyng, 12470

To have respit thre dayes and no mo,  
 To recomende to yow, er that I go,  
 These soules lo, and that I mighte do wirche  
 Heer of myn hous perpetuelly a chirche."

Seynt Urban, with his dekenes prively  
 The body fette, and buried it by nighte  
 Among his other seyntes honestely.  
 Hir hous the chirch of seynt Cecily yit highte;  
 Seynt Urban halwed it, as he wel mighte;  
 In which into this day in noble wyse 12480  
 Men doon to Crist and to his seint servise.

## THE PROLOGE OF THE CHANOUNS YEMAN.

WHAN ended was the lif of seynt Cecile,  
 Er we fully had riden fyve myle,  
 At Boughtoun under Blee us gan atake  
 A man, that clothed was in clothes blake,  
 And under that he had a whit surplice,  
 His hakeney, that was a pomely grice,  
 So swete, that it wonder was to se,  
 It semed he hadde priked myles thre.  
 The hors eek that his yyman rood upon, 12490  
 So swette, that unnethes might he goon.  
 Aboute the peytrel stood the foom ful hye,  
 He was of foom as flekked as a pye.  
 A male tweyfold on his croper lay,  
 It semed that he caried litel array,  
 Al light for somer rood this worthy man.  
 And in myn herte wondren I bigan



What that he was, til that I understood,  
How that his cloke was sowed unto his hood ;  
For which whan I long had avysed me, 12500  
I demed him som chanoun for to be.  
His hat heng at his bak down by a laas,  
For he had riden more than trot or paas,  
He had i-pryked lik as he were wood.  
A cloote-leef he had under his hood  
Eor swoot, and for to kepe his heed from hete.  
But it was joye for to se him swete ;  
His forhed dropped as a stillatorie  
Were ful of plantayn and of peritorie.  
And whanne that he was com, he gan to crie, 12510  
“ God save,” quod he, “ this joly compaignye !  
Fast have I priked,” quod he, “ for your sake,  
Bycause that I wolde you atake,  
To ryden in this mery companye.”

His yeman eek was ful of curtesye,  
And seid, “ Sires, now in the morwe tyde  
Out of your ostelry I saugh you ryde,  
And warned heer my lord and soverayn,  
Which that to ryden with yow is ful fayn,  
For his desport ; he loveth daliaunce.” 12520  
“ Frend, for thy warnyng God geve the good chaunce,”  
Saydeoure host, “ for certes it wolde seme  
Thy lord were wys, and so I may wel deme ;  
He is ful jocound also dar I leye :  
Can he ought telle a mery tale or tweye,  
With which he glade may this companye ?”  
“ Who, sire ? my lord ? Ye, ye, withoute lye,

He can of merthe and eek of jolité  
 Not but y-nough; also, sir, trusteth me,  
 And ye him knewe as wel as do I, 12530  
 Ye wolde wonder how wel and thriftily  
 He couthe werke, and that in sondry wise.  
 He hath take on him many sondry emprise,  
 Which were ful hard for eny that is heere  
 To bringe aboute, but thay of him it leere.  
 As homely as he ryt amonges yow,  
 If ye him knewe, it wolde be your prow:  
 Ye nolde nought for-gon his acqueyntaunce  
 For moche good, I dar lay in balaunce  
 Al that I have in my possessioun. 12540  
 He is a man of heigh discressioun,  
 I warne yow wel, he is a passyng man."

"Wel," quod our oost, "I pray the, tel me than,  
 Is he a clerk, or noon? tel what he is."  
 "Nay, he is gretter than a clerk i-wis,"  
 Sayde this yyman, "and in wordes fewe,  
 Ost, of his craft somewhat I wil you schewe.  
 I say, my lord can such a subtilité,  
 (But al his craft ye may nought wite of me,  
 And somewhat helpe I yit to his worchyng), 12550  
 That al this ground on which we ben ridyng  
 Til that we comen to Caunterbury toun,  
 He couthe al clene turnen up so doun,  
 And pave it al of silver and of gold."

And whan this yeman hadde thus i-told  
 Unto oure oost, he seyde, "*Benedicite!*"

This thing is wonder merveyulous to me,  
 Syn that this lord is of so heigh prudence,  
 Bycause of which men schuld him reverence,  
 That of his worschip rekketh he so lite ; 12560  
 His over slop it is not worth a myte  
 As in effect to him, so mot I go ;  
 It is al bawdy and to-tore also.  
 Why is thi lord so slottisch, I the preye,  
 And is of power better clothis to beye,  
 If that his dede accorde with thy speche ?  
 Telle me that, and that I the biseche."

"Why?" quod this yiman, "wherto axe ye me ?  
 God help me so, for he schal never the,  
 (But I wol nought avowe what I say, 12570  
 And therfor kep it secré I yow pray)  
 He is to wys in faith, as I bileve.  
 Thing that is over-don, it wil nought preve  
 Aright, as clerkes sein, it is a vice ;  
 Wherefore in that I holde him lewed and nyce.  
 For whan a man hath over-greet a witte,  
 Ful ofte him happeth to mysusen itte :  
 So doth my lord, and that me greveth sore.  
 God it amende, I can say now nomore."  
 "Therof no fors, good yeman," quod oure ost, 12580  
 "Syn of the connyng of thi lord thou wost,  
 Tel how he doth, I pray the hertily,  
 Sin that he is so crafty and so sly.  
 Wher dwellen ye, if it to telle be ?"  
 "In the subarbes of a toun," quod he,

“Lurking in hirnes and in lanes blynde,  
 Wher as these robbours and these theves by kynde  
 Holden here privé ferful residence,  
 As thay that dor nought schewen her presence ;  
 So faren we, if I schal say the sothe.” 12590

“Now,” quod oure ost, “yit let me talke to the ;  
 Why artow so discoloured on thy face ?”

“Peter !” quod he, “God give it harde grace,  
 I am so used the fuyr to blowe,  
 That it hath chaunged my colour I trowe ;  
 I am not wont in no mirour to prie,  
 But swynke sore, and lerne to multiplie.”  
 We blondren ever, and pouren in the fuyr,  
 And for al that we faile of oure desir,  
 For ever we lacken oure conclusioun. 12600  
 To moche folk we ben illusioun,  
 And borwe gold, be it a pound or tuo,  
 Or ten or twelve, or many sommes mo,  
 And make hem wenen atte leste weye,  
 That of a pound we conne make tweye.  
 Yit is it fals ; and ay we han good hope  
 It for to doon, and after it we grope :  
 But that science is so fer us biforn,  
 We mowen nought, although we had it sworn,  
 It overtake, it slyt away so fast ; 12610  
 It wol us make beggers atte last.”

Whil this yeman was thus in his talkyng,  
 This Chanoun drough him ner and herd al thing  
 Which that this yiman spak, for suspeccioun  
 Of mennes speche ever hadde this Chanoun :

For Catoun saith, that he that gulty is,  
 Demeth al thing be spoke of him, i-wis :  
 By cause of that he gan so neigh to drawe  
 His yeman, that he herde al his sawe ;  
 And thus he sayd unto his yeman tho : 12620  
 " Hold now thi pees, and spek no wordes mo :  
 For if thou do, thou schalt it deere abyde.  
 Thow selaundrest me here in this companye,  
 And eek discoverest that thou schuldest hide."  
 " Ye," quod oure ost, " tel on, what so bytyde ;  
 Of alle this thretyng recche the nought a myte."  
 " In faith," quod he, " no more do I but lite."  
 And whan this Chanoun seih it wold not be,  
 But his yeman wold telle his priveté,  
 He fledde away for verray sorwe and schame. 12630  
 " A !" quod the yeman, " her schal arise game :  
 Al that I can anoon now wol I telle,  
 Sin he is goon ; the foule feend him quelle !  
 For never hereafter wol I with him meete  
 For peny ne for pound, I wol byheete.  
 He that me broughte first unto that game,  
 Er that he deye, sorwe have he and schame !  
 For it is ernest to me, by my faith ;  
 That fele I wel, what so eny man saith ;  
 And yet for al my smert, and al my greef, 12640  
 For al my sorwe, and labour, and mescheef,

---

12616—*Catoun saith.* The allusion is to *Cato de Morib.* lib. i, distich 17,—

Ne cures si quis tacito sermone loquatur ;  
 Consciens ipse sibi de se putat omnia dici.

I couthe never leve it in no wise.  
 Now wolde God my wyt mighte suffice  
 To tellen al that longeth to that art ;  
 But natheles, yet wil I telle yow part ;  
 Sin that my lord is goon, I wol nought spare,  
 Such thing as that I knowe, I wol declare.

“ With this Chanoun I duelled have seven yer,  
 And of his science am I never the ner:  
 Al that I hadde, I have lost therby, 12650  
 And God wot, so hath many mo than I.  
 Ther I was wont to be right freisch and gay  
 Of clothing, and of other good array,  
 Now may I were an hose upon myn heed ;  
 And where my colour was bothe freissch and reed,  
 Now it is wan, and of a leden hewe,  
 (Who so it useth, sore schal he rewe);  
 And of my swynk yet blended is myn ye ;  
 Lo ! such avauntage it is to multiplie !  
 That slydyng science had me made so bare, 12660  
 That I have no good, wher that ever I fare ;  
 And yit I am endetted so therby  
 Of gold, that I have borwed trewely,  
 That whil I lyve schal I quite never ;  
 Lat every man be war by me for ever.  
 What maner man that casteth him therto,  
 If he continue, I holde his thrift i-do ;  
 So help me God, therby schal he not wyne,  
 But empte his purs, and make his wittes thynne.  
 And whan he, thurgh his madnes and folye, 12670  
 Hath lost his owne good in jeopardie,

Than he exciteth other men therto,  
 To leese her good as he himself hath do.  
 For unto schrewes joy it is and ese  
 To have here felawes in peyne and desese.  
 Thus was I oones lerned of a clerk ;  
 Of that no charge ; I wol speke of oure werk.  
 Whan we ben ther as we schul exercise  
 Oure elvyssh craft, we seme wonder wyse,  
 Oure termes ben so clergeal and queynte. 12680  
 I blowe the fuyr til that myn herte feynte.  
 What schulde I telle ech proporcoun  
 Of thinges which that we werke up and down,  
 As on fyve or six ounces, may wel be,  
 Of silver, or som other quantité ?  
 And besy me to telle yow the names,  
 As orpiment, brent bones, yren squames,  
 That into poudre grounden ben ful smal ?  
 And in an erthen pot how put is al,  
 And salt y-put in, and also paupere, 12690  
 Biforn these poudres that I speke of heere,  
 And wel i-covered with a lamp of glas ?  
 And of moche other thing what that ther was ?  
 And of the pot and glas enlutyng,  
 That of the aier mighte passe no thing ?  
 And of the esy fuyr, and smert also,  
 Which that was maad ? and of the care and wo,  
 That we hadde in oure matiers sublymyng,

---

12694—*pot and glas*. This is the reading of the Harleian and Lansdowne MSS. Tyrwhitt reads, *pottes and glasses englutynge*, which seems to improve the metre.

And in amalgamyng, and calcenynge  
 Of quyksilver, y-clept mercury crude? 12700  
 For alle oure sleightes we can nought conclude.  
 Oure orpiment, and sublyment mercurie,  
 Oure grounde litarge eek on the porfurye,  
 Of ech of these of ounces a certayn  
 Nat helpeth us, oure labour is in vayn.  
 Ne eek oure spirites ascencioun,  
 Ne eek oure matiers that lyn al fix adoun,  
 Mowe in oure werkyng us no thing awayle;  
 For lost is al oure labour and travayle,  
 And al the cost on twenty devel way 12710  
 Is lost also, which we upon it lay.  
 Ther is also ful many another thing,  
 That is to oure craft appertenynge,  
 Though I by ordre hem here rehearse ne can,  
 Bycause that I am a lewed man,  
 Yet wil I telle hem, as they come to mynde,  
 Though I ne conne nought sette hem in her kynde:  
 As bol armoniak, verdegres, boras;  
 And sondry vessels maad of erthe and glas,  
 Oure urinals and oure descensories, 12720  
 Viols, croslets, and sublimatories,  
 Concurbites, and alembikes eeke,  
 And othere suche, deere y-nough a leeke,  
 Nat needith it to rehersen hem alle;  
 Watres rubifying, and boles galle,  
 Arsnek, sal armoniak, and brimstoon.

---

12702—*sublyment*. The Lansd. MS., with Tyrwhitt, reads *sublimed*.

12725—*rubifying*. MS. Harl. reads *rubisying*.



And herbes couthe I telle eek many oon,  
 As egrimoigne, valirian, and lunarie,  
 And other suche, if that me list to tarie ;  
 Oure lampes brennyng bothe night and day, 12730  
 To bringe aboute oure craft if that we may ;  
 Oure fourneys eek of calcinacioun,  
 And of watres albificacioun,  
 Unslekked lym, salt, and glayre of an ey,  
 Poudres dyvers, aissches, dong, pisse, and cley,  
 Cered poketts, sal petre, vitriole ;  
 And dyvers fuyres maad of woode and cole ;  
 Salt tartre, alcaly, and salt preparat,  
 And combust matieres, and coagulat ;  
 Cley maad with hors or mannes her, and oyle 12740  
 Of tartre, alym, glas, berm, wort, and argoyle,  
 Resalgar, and oure matiers enbibing ;  
 And eek of oure matiers encorporing,  
 And of oure silver citrinacioun,  
 Oure cementyng and fermentacioun,  
 Oure yngottes, testes, and many thinges mo.  
 I wol you telle as was me taught also  
 The foure spiritz, and the bodies seven  
 By ordre, as ofte herd I my lord neven.  
 The firste spirit quyksilver called is ; 12750  
 The secound orpiment ; the thridde i-wis  
 Sal armoniac, and the ferthe bremstoon.

12732—*fourneys*. The MS. Harl. appears to read *fournes* ; but MS. Lansd. reads *forneys*, which is adopted by Tyrwhitt, and seems to be correct.

12734—*salt*. The Lansd. MS., with Tyrwhitt, reads *chalk*.

The bodies seven, eek, lo hem heer anoon.  
 Sol gold is, and Luna silver we threpe ;  
 Mars yren, Mercurie quyksilver we clepe :  
 Saturnus leed, and Jubitur is tyn,  
 And Venus coper, by my fader kyn.

“ This cursed craft who so wol exercise,  
 He schal no good han that may him suffise ;  
 For al the good he spendeth therabout 12760  
 He lese schal, therof have I no doute.  
 Who so that list outen his folye,  
 Let him come forth and lerne multiplie :  
 And every man that hath ought in his cofre,  
 Let him appiere, and wexe a filosofre,  
 Ascauns that craft is so light to lere.  
 Nay, nay, God wot, al be he monk or frere,  
 Prest or chanoun, or eny other wight,  
 Though he sit at his book bothe day and night  
 In lernyng of this elvysch nice lore, 12770  
 Al is in vayn, and pardé moche more  
 Is to lerne a lewed man this subtilté ;  
 Fy, spek not therof, for it wil not be.  
 Al couthe he letterure, or couthe he noon,  
 As in effect, he schal fynd it al oon ;  
 For bothe tuo by my salvacioun  
 Concluden in multiplicacioun  
 I-liche wel, whan thay han al y-do ;  
 This is to sayn, thay fayle bothe tuo.  
 Yet forgat I to make rehersayle 12780  
 Of watres corosif, and of lymayle,  
 And of bodyes mollificacioun,

And also of here enduracioun,  
 Oyles ablucioun, and metal fusible,  
 To tellen al, wold passen eny bible  
 That o wher is ; wherfore, as for the best,  
 Of alle these names now wil I me rest ;  
 For, as I trowe, I have yow told y-nowe  
 To reyse a feend, al loke he never so rowe.

A, nay, let be ; the philosophre stoon, 12790

Elixir clept, we sechen fast echoon,  
 For had we him, than were we syker y-nough ;  
 But unto God of heven I make avow,  
 For al oure craft, whan we han al y-do,  
 And al oure sleight, he wol not come us to.

He hath i-made us spende moche good,  
 For sorwe of which almost we wexen wood,  
 But that good hope crepeth in oure herte,  
 Supposing ever, though we sore smerte,  
 To ben relieved by him after-ward. 12800

Such supposing and hope is scharp and hard.  
 I warne you wel it is to seken ever.  
 That future temps hath made men dissevere,  
 In trust therof, from al that ever they hadde.  
 Yet of that art thay conne nought wexe sadde,  
 For unto hem it is a bitter swete ;  
 So semeth it ; for nad thay but a scheete  
 Which thay mighte wrappe hem in a-night,  
 And a bak to walke inne by day-light,  
 They wolde hem selle, and spenden on this craft ; 12810

---

12809—*bak*. This is the reading of the Harl. and Lansd. MSS.  
 Tyrwhitt reads *bratt*, which he interprets a *coarse mantle*.

Thay can nought stinte, til no thing be laft.  
 And evermore, wher that ever they goon,  
 Men may hem knowe by smel of bremstoon;  
 For al the world thay stynken as a goot;  
 Her savour is so rammyssch and so hoot,  
 That though a man fro hem a myle be,  
 The savour wol infecte him, trusteth me.  
 Lo, thus by smellyng and by thred-bare array,  
 If that men list, this folk they knowe may.  
 And if a man wol aske hem prively, 12820  
 Why thay ben clothed so unthriftily,  
 Right anoon thay wol rounen in his eere,  
 And say, if that thay espied were,  
 Men wold hem slee, bycause of here science:  
 Lo, thus this folk bytrayen innocence.  
 Passe over this, I go my tale unto.  
 Er than the pot be on the fuyr y-do  
 Of metals with a certeyn quantité,  
 My lord hem tempreth, and no man but he;  
 (Now he' is goon, I dar say boldely) 12830  
 For as men sayn, he can doon craftily;  
 Algate I wot wel he hath such a name,  
 And yet ful ofte he renneth in blame;  
 " And wite ye how? ful ofte it happeth so,  
 The pot to-breketh, and farwel al is goo.  
 These metals been of so gret violence,  
 Oure walles may not make hem resistance,  
 But if thay were wrought of lym and stoon:  
 Thay percen so, that thurgh the wal thay goon;  
 And some of hem synken into the grounde, 12840

(Thus have we lost by tymes many a pounde),  
And some are skatered al the floor aboute ;  
Some lepe into the roof, withouten doute.  
Though that the feend nought in oure sight him schewe,  
I trowe that he with us be, that schrewe ;  
In helle, wher that he is lord and sire,  
Nis ther no more woo, ne anger, ne ire.  
Whan that oure pot is broke, as I have sayd,  
Every man chyt, and halt him evel apayde.  
Som sayd it was long on the fuyr-makyng ;      12850  
Some sayde nay, it was on the blowyng ;  
(Than was I ferd, for that was myn office).

‘Straw!’ quod the thridde, ‘ye been lewed and nyce,  
It was nought tempred as it oughte be.’

‘Nay,’ quod the ferthe, ‘stynt and herkne me ;  
Bycause oure fuyr was nought y-maad of beech,  
That is the cause, and other noon, so theech.’

I can not telle wheron it was long,  
But wel I woot gret stryf is us among.

‘What?’ quod my lord, ‘ther is no more to doone,      12860  
Of these periles I wol be war eftsoone.

I am right siker, that the pot was crased.  
Be as be may, be ye no thing amased.

As usage is, let swoope the floor as swithe ;  
Pluk up your hertes and beth glad and blithe.’

The mullok on an heep i-swoped was,

And on the floor y-cast a canevas,

And al this mulloc in a syve i-throwe,

And sifted, and y-plukked many a throwe.

‘Pardé,’ quod oon, ‘somwhat of oure metal      12870

Yet is ther heer, though that we have nought al.  
 And though this thing myshapped hath as now,  
 Another tyme it may be wel y-now.  
 Us moste putte oure good in adventure.  
 A marchaunt, pardé, may not ay endure,  
 Trusteth me wel, in his prosperité;  
 Som tyme his good is drowned in the see,  
 And som tyme cometh it sauf unto the londe.<sup>7</sup>  
 'Pees!' quod my lord, 'the nexte tyme I wol fonde  
 To bringe oure craft al in another plyte, 12880  
 And but I do, sires, let me have the wyte:  
 Ther was defaute in som what, wel I woot.'  
 Another sayde, the fuyr was over hoot.  
 But be it hoot or cold, I dar say this,  
 That we concluden evermor amys;  
 We faile of that which that we wolden have,  
 And in oure madnesse evermore we rave.  
 And whan we ben togideres everichon,  
 Everiche man semeth a Salamon.  
 But al thing which that schineth as the gold, 12890  
 Is nought gold, as that I have herd told;  
 Ne every appel that is fair at ye,  
 Ne is not good, what so men clappe or crye.  
 Right so, lo, fareth it amonges us.  
 He that semeth the wisest, by Jesus!  
 Is most fool, whan it cometh to the preef;

---

12890—as *the gold*. This proverb is taken directly from the *Parabolæ* of Alanus de Insulis, who expresses it thus in two Leonines,—

Non teneas aurum totum quod splendet ut aurum,  
 Nec pulchrum pomum quodlibet esse bonum.

And he that semeth trewest, is a theef.  
That schul ye knowe, er that I fro yow wende,  
By that I of my tale have maad an ende.

“ Ther is a chanoun of religioun 12900  
Amonges us, wold infecte al a toun,  
Though it as gret were as was Ninive,  
Rome, Alisaundre, Troye, or other thre.  
His sleight and his infinite falsnesse  
Ther couthe no man writen, as I gesse,  
Though that he mighte lyven a thousand yeer ;  
Of al this world of falsheed nys his peer,  
For in his termes he wol him so wynde,  
And speke his wordes in so sleygh a kynde,  
Whan he comune schal with eny wight, 12910  
That he wil make him dote anoon right,  
But it a feend be, as him selven is.  
Ful many a man hath he bygiled er this,  
And wol, if that he lyve may a while :  
And yet men ryde and goon ful many a myle  
Him for to seeke, and have his aqueintaunce,  
Nought knowyng of his false governaunce.  
And if yow list to geve me audience,  
I wol it telle here in youre presence.  
But, worschipful chanouns religious, 12920  
Ne demeth not that I sclaudre youre hous,  
Although my tale of a chanoun be.  
Of every ordre som schrewe is, pardee :  
And God forbede that al a companye  
Schulde rewe a singuler mannes folye.  
To sclauder yow is no thing myn entent,

But to correcten that is mys I ment.  
 This tale was not oonly told for yow,  
 But eek for other moo: ye woot wel how  
 That among Cristes apostles twelve 12930  
 Ther was no traytour but Judas him selve;  
 Than why schulde the remenaunt have a blame,  
 That gulteles were? by yow I say the same.  
 Save oonly this, if ye wol herkene me,  
 If any Judas in youre covent be,  
 Remewe him by tyme, I yow rede,  
 If schame or los may causen eny drede.  
 And beth no thing displesed, I you pray,  
 But in this caas herkeneth what I say."

## THE CHANOUNES YEMANNES TALE.

IN Londoun was a prest, an annueler, 12940  
 That therin dwelled hadde many a yer,  
 Which was so plesaunt and so servisable  
 Unto the wyf, wher as he was at table,

---

*The Chanounes Yemannes Tale.* In a preceding tale, Chaucer has touched upon the astrologers and practisers of "magike naturel"; this, and perhaps some temporary occurrences, led him now to satirize bitterly another class who infected society at this period, the alchemists. The Chanounes Yemannes Tale may describe an occurrence in Chaucer's time, for the "multipliers" seem to have been very busy deceiving people at the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries; and Tyrwhitt has pointed out as a curious coincidence, that an act was passed soon after the poet's death, 5 H. IV, c. iv, making it felony "to multiplie gold or silver, or to use the art of multiplication."

12940—*an annueler.* "They were called *annuelleres*, not from their receiving a yearly stipend, as the Gloss. explains it, but from their being employed solely in singing *annuals*, or *anniversary masses*, for the dead, without any cure of souls. See the Stat. 36 Edw. III, c. viii, where the



That sche wolde suffre him no thing for to pay  
 For bord ne clothing, went he never so gay;  
 And spending silver had he right y-nough :  
 Therof no force ; I wol procede as now,  
 And telle forth my tale of the chanoun,  
 That brought this prest to confusioun.

This false chanoun cam upon a day 12950  
 Unto the prestes chambre, wher he lay,  
 Biseching him to lene him a certeyn  
 Of gold, and he wold quyt it him ageyn.  
 "Lene me a mark," quod he, " but dayes thre,  
 And at my day I wil it quyte the.  
 And if so be, that thou fynde me fals,  
 Another day hong me up by the hals."  
 This prest him took a mark, and that as swithe,  
 And this chanoun him thankid ofte sithe,  
 And took his leve, and wente forth his wey ; 12960  
 And atte thridde day brought his money,  
 And to the prest he took his gold agayn,  
 Wherof this prest was wonder glad and fayn.  
 " Certes," quod he, " no thing annoyeth me  
 To lene a man a noble, or tuo, or thre,  
 Or what thing were in my possessioun,  
 Whan he so trewe is of condicioun,  
 That in no wise he breke wol his day :

---

*chapelleins parochiels* are distinguished from others *chantans anuales*, et à cure des âmes nient entendantz. They were both to receive yearly stipends, but the former was allowed to take six marks, and the latter only five. Compare Stat. 2 H. V, St. 2, c. 2, where the stipend of the *chapellein parochiel* is raised to eight marks, and that of the *chapellein annuel* (he is so named in the statute) to seven."—*Tyrwhitt*.

- To such a man I can never say nay." 12969
- "What?" quod this chanoun, "schold I be untrewé?  
Nay, that were thing i-fallen of the newe.  
Trouthe is a thing that I wol ever kepe,  
Unto that day in which that I schal crepe  
Into my grave, and elles God forbede!  
Believeth that as siker as your crede.  
God thank I, and in good tyme be it sayd,  
That ther was never man yet evel apayd  
For gold ne silver that he to me lent,  
Ne never falshed in myn hert I ment.  
And, sire," quod he, "now of my priveté, 12980  
Syn ye so goodlich have be unto me,  
And kythed to me so gret gentilesce,  
Som what, to quyte with youre kyndenesse,  
I wil yow schewe, and if yow lust to lere  
I wil yow teche pleynly the manere,  
How I kan werken in philosophie.  
Takith good heed, ye schul seen wel at ye,  
That I wol doon a maystry er I go."  
"Ye?" quod the prest, "ye, sire, and wol ye so?  
Mary! therof I pray yow hertily." 12990  
"At youre comaundement, sire, trewely,"  
Quod the chanoun, "and elles God forbede!"  
Lo, how this theef couthe his servise beede.  
Ful soth it is that such profred servise  
Stynketh, as witnessen these olde wise;  
And that ful soone I wol it verefye  
In this chanoun, roote of al treccherie,  
That evermor delit hath and gladnesse

(Such feendly thoughtes in his hert empresse)  
 How Cristes poeple he may to meschief bringe. 13000  
 God kepe us from his fals dissimilynge.  
 What wiste this prest with whom that he delte?  
 Ne of his harm comyng he no thing felte.  
 O seely prest, o sely innocent,  
 With coveytise anoon thou schalt be blent;  
 O graceles, ful blynd is thy conceyt,  
 No thing art thou war of the deceyt,  
 Which that this fox i-schapien hath to the;  
 His wily wrenches y-wis thou maist not fle.  
 Wherfor to go to the conclusioun, 13010  
 That referreth to thy confusioun,  
 Unhappy man, anoon I wil me hie  
 To tellen thin unwitte and thy folye,  
 And eek the falsnesse of that other wrecche,  
 Als ferforth as my connyng wol strecche.

This chanoun was my lord, ye wolde weene:  
 Sire ost, in faith, and by the heven queene,  
 It was another chanoun, and not he,  
 That can an hundred fold more subilté.  
 He hath bitrayed folkes many tyme; 13020  
 Of his falsnes it dullith me to ryme.  
 Ever whan I speke of his falshede,  
 For schame of him my cheekes wexen reede;  
 Algates thay bygynne for to glowe,  
 For reednes have I noon, right wel I knowe,  
 In my visage, for fumes diverse  
 Of metals, which ye han me herd rehorse,  
 Consumed and wasted han my reodnesse.

Now tak heed of this chanouns cursednesse.

“Sire,” quod he to the prest, “let your mangoon 13036  
For quyksilver, that we it hadde anoon;  
And let him bringe ounces tuo or thre;  
And whan he cometh, as faste schul ye see  
A wonder thing, which ye saugh never er this.”  
“Sire,” quod the prest, “it schal be doon, i-wis.”  
He bad his servaunt fecche him his thinges,  
And he al redy was at his biddynges,  
And went him forth, and com anoon agayn  
With this quyksilver, schortly for to sayn,  
And took these ounces thre to the chanoun; 13040  
And he it layde faire and wel adoun,  
And bad the servaunt coles for to bringe,  
That he anoon might go to his werkynge.  
The coles right anoon weren i-fett,  
And this chanoun took out a croselett  
Of his bosom, and schewed it the prest:  
“This instrument,” quod he, “which that thou sest,  
Tak in thin hond, and put thiself therinne  
Of this quiksilver an unce, and her bygynne  
In the name of Crist to wax a philosophre. 13050  
Ther ben ful fewe, whiche that I wolde profre  
To schewe hem thus moche of my science:  
For ye schul seen heer by experience,  
That this quiksilver I wol mortifye,  
Right in youre sight anoon, withouten lye,  
And make it as good silver and as fyn  
As ther is any in youre purs or myn,  
Or elles wher; and make it malleable;

And elles holdeth me fals and unable  
 Amonges folk for ever to appeere. 13060

I have a pouder heer that cost me deere,  
 Schal make al good, for it is cause of al  
 My connyng, which that I you schewe schal.  
 Voydith youre man, and let him be theroute ;  
 And schet the dore, whils we ben aboute  
 Oure privetee, that no man us asprie,  
 Whiles we werken in this philosophie."  
 Al, as he bad, fulfilled was in dede.  
 This ilke servaunt anoon right out yede,  
 And his maister schitte the dore anoon, 13070  
 And to here labour speedily thai goon.

This prest, at this cursed chanouns biddyng,  
 Upon the fuyr anoon sette this thing,  
 And blew the fuyr, and busied him ful fast ;  
 And this chanoun into the croslet cast  
 A pouder, noot I wherof that it was  
 I-maad, outhere of chalk, outhere of glas,  
 Or som what elles, was nought worth a flye,  
 To blynde with this prest ; and bad him hye  
 These coles for to couchen al above 13080  
 The croislet ; for " in tokenyng I the love,"  
 Quod this chanoun, " thin oughne handes tuo  
 Schal wirche al thing which that schal be do."  
 " Graunt mercy," quod the prest, and was ful glad,  
 And couchede coles as the chanoun bad.

---

13062—*good*. I have ventured to retain Tyrwhitt's reading, which is supported by the Lansdowne MS. The Harl. MS. reads, *gold*.

And whil he besy was, this feendly wrecche,  
This false chanoun (the foule feend him fecche!)  
Out of his bosom took a bechen cole,  
In which ful subtilly was maad an hole,  
And therin put was of silver lymayle 13000  
An unce, and stopped was withoute fayle  
The hole with wex, to kepe the lymail in.  
And understondith, that this false gyn  
Was not maad ther, but it was maad bifore ;  
And other thinges I schal telle more  
Herafter-ward, which that he with him brought.  
Er he com there, to bigyle him he thought,  
And so he dede, er thay wente atwynne :  
Til he had torned him, couthe he nought blynn.  
It dulleth me, whan that I of him speke ; 13100  
On his falshede fayn wold I me wreke,  
If I wist how, but he is heer and there,  
He is so variant, he byt no where.

But taketh heed now, sires, for Goddes love.  
He took his cole of which I spak above,  
And in his hond he bar it prively,  
And whiles the preste couched bysily  
The coles, as I tolde yow er this,  
This chanoun sayde, " Freend, ye doon amys ;  
This is not couched as it oughte be, 13010  
But soone I schal amenden it," quod he.  
" Now let me melle therwith but a while,  
For of yow have I pitee, by seint Gile !  
Ye been right hoot, I se wel how ye swete ;  
Have heer a cloth and wype away the wete."

And whiles that this prest him wyped haas,  
 This chanoun took his cole, I schrewe his faas!  
 And layd it aboven on the myd-ward  
 Of the croslet, and blew wel afterward,  
 Til that the coles gonne faste brenne. 13120  
 "Now geve us drinke," quod the chanoun thenne,  
 "Als swithe al schal be wel, I undertake.  
 Sitte we down, and let us mery make."  
 And whan that the chanounes bechene cole  
 Was brent, al the lymail out of the hole  
 Into the crosselet anoon fel adoun;  
 And so it moste needes by resoun,  
 Sins it so even above couched was;  
 But therof wist the prest no thing, allas!  
 He demed alle the colis i-liche goode, 13130  
 For of the sleight he no thing understood.  
 And whan this alcamister saugh his tyme,  
 "Rys up, sire prest," quod he, "and stonde by me;  
 And for I wot wel ingot have ye noon,  
 Goth, walkith forth, and brynge a chalk-stoon;  
 For I wol make it of the same schap,  
 That is an ingold, if I may have hap.  
 And bringe with you a bolle or a panne  
 Ful of water, and ye schul wel se thanno  
 How that oure besynes schal happe and preve. 13140

13124. This line, as it stands in the Harl. MS,

And whan the chanouns bechene cole,  
 appears to be imperfect, although it is supported by the Lansdowne MS.  
 I have ventured to add the word *that* from Tyrwhitt, and to insert  
 the *e* in *chanounes*, which had probably slipped out by the inadvertence  
 of a scribe.

And yit, for ye schul have no mysbileeve  
 Ne wrong conceyt of me in youre absence,  
 I ne wol nought ben out of youre presence,  
 But go with you, and come with you agayn."  
 The chambur dore, schortly for to sayn,  
 Thay opened and schette, and wente here weye,  
 And forth with hem they caryed the keye,  
 And comen agayn withouten eny delay.  
 What schuld I tary al the longe day?  
 He took the chalk, and schop it in the wise 13150  
 Of an ingot, as I schal yow devyse ;  
 I say, he took out of his oughne sleeve  
 A teyne of silver (evel mot he cheeve !)  
 Which that was but an unce of wight.  
 And taketh heed now of his cursed slight ;  
 He schop his ingot in lengthe and in brede  
 Of this teyne, withouten eny drede,  
 So sleighly, that the prest it nought aspyde ;  
 And in his sleeve agayn he gan it hyde ;  
 And fro the fuyr he took up his mateere, 13160  
 And into the ingot put it with mery cheere :  
 And into the watir-vessel he it cast,  
 Whan that him list, and bad this prest as fast,  
 " Loke what ther is ; put in thin hond and grope ;  
 Thou fynde ther schalt silver, as I hope."  
 What devel of helle schold it elles be ?

---

13146—*wente here weye*. The Harl. and Lansd. MSS. read, *wente forth here weye*, which makes a redundancy in the measure ; the superfluous word appears to have been brought in here from the beginning of the next line.



Schavyng of silver, silver is, pardé !

He putte in his hond and tok up a teyne

Of silver fyn, and glad in every veyne

Was this prest, whan he saugh it was so. 13170

“ Goddes blessing, and his modres also,

And alle halwes, have ye, sire chanoun !”

Seyde this prest, and I her malisoun ;

“ But, and ye vouche sauf to teche me

This nobil craft and this subtilité,

I wil be youre in al that ever I may.”

Quod this chanoun, “ Yet wol I make assay

The secound tyme, that ye mow taken heede,

And ben expert of this, and in your neede

Another day assay in myn absence 13180

This dicipline, and this crafty science.

Let take another unce,” quod he tho,

“ Of quyksilver, withouten wordes mo,

And do therwith as ye have doon er this

With that other, which that now silver is.”

The prest him busyeth in al that he can

To doon as this chanoun, this cursed man,

Comaunded him, and faste blew the fuyr,

For to come to theeffect of his desyr.

And this chanoun right in the mene while 13190

Al redy was this prest eft to bygile,

And for a countenaunce in his hond bar

---

13180—*assay*. The Harl. MS. substitutes *your self*, which makes an unintelligible sentence, without a verb. The Lansd. MS. omits the word, and makes the line imperfect in measure as well as grammatical construction.

An holow stikke (tak keep and be war),  
 In thende of which an unce and no more  
 Of silver lymail put was, as bifore  
 Was in his cole, and stopped with wex wel  
 For to kepe in his limail every del.  
 And whil the prest was in his besynesse,  
 This chanoun with his stikke gan him dresse  
 To him anoon, and his pouder cast in, 13200  
 As he dede er, (the devel out of his skyn  
 Him torne, I pray to God, for his falshede !  
 For he was ever fals in worde and deede).  
 And with this stikke above the croslet,  
 That was ordeyned with that false get,  
 He styred the coles, til relente gan  
 The wex agayn the fuyr, as every man,  
 But it a fool be, woot wel it moot neede  
 And al that in the hole was out yede,  
 And into the croslet hastily it fel. 13210  
 Now, good sires, what wol ye bet than wel ?  
 Whan that this prest thus was begiled agayn,  
 Supposyng not but trouthe, soth to sayn,  
 He was so glad, that I can nought expresse  
 In no maner his myrthe and his gladnesse,  
 And to the chanoun he profred eft soone  
 Body and good. "Ye," quod the chanoun, "soone,  
 Though pore I be, crafty thou schalt me fynde :

---

13203—*worde*. This, which is the reading of the Lansd. MS., is perhaps better than that of the Harl. MS., *oth*. Tyrwhitt has *thought*.

13204—*above*. So Tyrwhitt and the Lansd. MS., apparently the correct reading. The Harl. MS. reads *alone*.

I warne the, yet is ther more byhynde.  
 Is ther any copur her withinne ?" quod he. 13220  
 "Ye, sir," quod this prest, "I trowe ther be.  
 Elles go bye som, and that as swithe."  
 "Now goode sire, go forth thy way and hy the."  
 He went his way, and with this copur cam;  
 And this chanoun it in his hondes nam,  
 And of that copur weyed out but an ounce.  
 Al to simple is my tonge to pronounce,  
 As minister of my witt, the doublenesse  
 Of this chanoun, roote of al cursednesse.  
 He semed frendly to hem that knew him nought, 13230  
 But he was fendly bothe in werk and thought.  
 It werieth me to telle of his falsnesse;  
 And natheles yit wol I it expresse,  
 To that entent men may be war therby,  
 And for noon other cause trewely.  
 He put this unce of copur in the croslet,  
 And on the fuyr als swithe he hath it set,  
 And cast in pouder, and made the prest to blowe,  
 And in his worching for to stoupe lowe,  
 As he dede er, and al nas but a jape; 13240  
 Right as him list the prest he made his ape.  
 And afterward in the ingot he it cast,  
 And in the panne putte it atte last  
 Of water, and in he put his owne hond.  
 And in his sleeve, as ye byforn-hond

---

13228—as minister of my witt. I retain this reading from Tyrwhitt, as apparently furnishing the best meaning. MS. Harl. reads, *the minister and of his witt*; the reading of the Lansd. MS. is, *his monstre and his wille*.

Herde me telle, he had a silver teyne ;  
He sleyghly took it out, this cursed heyne,  
(Unwitynge this prest of his false craft),  
And in the pannes botme he hath it laft;  
And in the water rumbleth to and fro. 13250  
And wonder prively took up also  
The coper teyne, (nought knowyng this prest)  
And hidde it, and hent him by the brest,  
And to him spak, and thus sayde in his game ;  
“ Stoupeth adoun ! by God, ye ben to blame ;  
Helpeth me now, as I dede yow whil er ;  
Put in your hond, and loke what is ther.”  
This prest took up this silver teyne anon.  
And thanne sayde the chanoun, let us goon  
With these thre teynes whiche that we han wrought, 13260  
To som goldsmyth, and wite if it be ought.  
For by my faith I nolde, for myn hood,  
But if they were silver fyn and good,  
And that as swithe proved schal it be.”  
Unto the goldsmith with these teynes thre  
Thay went, and putte these teynes in assay  
To fuyr and hammer : might no man say nay,  
But that thay were as hem oughte be.

This sotted prest, who was gladder than he ?  
Was never brid gladder agayn the day ; 13270  
Ne nightyngale in the sesoun of May  
Was never noon, that liste better to synge ;  
Ne lady lustier in carolyng ;  
Or for to speke of love and wommanhede,  
Ne knyght in armes doon an hardy deede

To stonde in grace of his lady deere,  
 Than hadde this prest this craft for to lere ;  
 And to the chanoun thus he spak and seyde :  
 " For the love of God, that for us alle deyde,  
 And as I may deserve it unto yow, 13280  
 What schal this receyt coste? telleth now."  
 " By oure lady," quod the chanoun, " it is deere,  
 I warne yow wel, for, save I and a freere,  
 In Engelond ther can no man it make."  
 " No fors," quoth he ; " now, sire, for Goddes sake,  
 What schal I paye? telleth me, I pray."  
 " I-wis," quod he, " it is ful dere I say.  
 Sire, at a word, if that ye lust it have,  
 Ye schul pay fourty pound, so God me save ;  
 And nere the frendschipe that ye dede er this 13290  
 To me, ye schulde paye more i-wys."  
 This prest the somme of fourty pound anon  
 Of nobles fette, and tooke hem everychoon  
 To this chanoun, for this ilk receyt.  
 Al his werkynge nas but fraude and deceyt.  
 " Sire prest," he seyde, " I kepe have no loos  
 Of my craft, for I wold it kept were cloos ;  
 And as ye loveth me, kepeth it secré.  
 For and men knewe al my sotilté,  
 By God, men wolden have so gret envye 13300  
 To me, bycause of my philosophie,  
 I schulde be deed, ther were noon other weye."  
 " God it forbede," quoth the prest, " what seye.

---

13283—*for, save*. The Harl. MS. reads, *for, sire*, which is evidently an error: the Lansd. MS. has, *bot, save*, and Tyrwhitt, *that save*.

Yet had I lever spenden al the good  
Which that I have, (and elles wax I wood)  
Than that ye schulde falle in such meschief."  
"For your good wil, sir, have ye right good preef,"  
Quoth the chanoun, "and far wel, *graunt mercy*."  
He went his way, and never the prest him sey  
After this day : and whan that this prest scholde 13310  
Maken assay, at such tyme as he wolde,  
Of this receyt, far wel, it wold not be.  
Lo, thus byjaped and bygilt was he :  
Thus maketh he his introduccioun  
To bringe folk to here destruccioun.

Considereth, sires, how that in ech astaat  
Bitwixe men and gold ther is debaat,  
So ferforth that unnethe ther is noon.  
This multiplying blent so many oon,  
That in good faith I trowe that it be 13320  
The cause grettest of swich scarseté.  
Philosophres speken so mistyly  
In this craft, that men conne not come therby,  
For any witt that men han now on dayes.  
They may wel chiteren, as doon these jayes,  
And in here termes sette lust and peyne,  
But to her purpos schul thay never atteyne.  
A man may lightly lerne, if he have ought,  
To multiplie, and bringe his good to nought.  
Lo, such a lucre is in this lusty game ; 13330  
A mannes mirthe it wol torne into grame,  
And empte also grete and hevy purses,  
And make folk for to purchace curses  
Of hem, that han her good therto i-lent.

O, fy! for schame, thay that have be brent,  
 Allas! can thay not fle the fuyres hete?  
 Ye that it usen, I rede ye it lete,  
 Lest ye lesen al; for bet than never is late:  
 Never to thrive, were to long a date.  
 Though ye prolle ay, ye schul it never fynde: 13340  
 Ye ben as bolde as is Bayard the blynde,  
 That blundreth forth, and peril casteth noon:  
 He is as bold to renne agayn a stoon,  
 As for to go bysides in the wey:  
 So fare ye that multiplie, I sey.  
 If that youre yghen can nought seen aright,  
 Loke that youre mynde lakke nought his sight.  
 For though ye loke never so brode and stare,  
 Ye schul nought wynne a mite on that chaffare,  
 But wasten al, that thay may rape and renne. 13350  
 Withdrawe the fuyr, lest it to faste brenne;  
 Medleth no more with that art, I mene;  
 For gif ye doon, youre thrift is goon ful clene.  
 And right as swithe I wol yow telle heere  
 What philosophres sein in this mateere.  
 Lo, thus saith Arnold of the Newe-toun,

---

13341—*Bayard the blynde*. This appears to have been a very popular old proverb. A number of references illustrative of it will be found in Mr. Halliwell's *Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words*; the following passage from Gower's *Confess. Amantis* is nearly parallel to Chaucer:—

Ther is no God, ther is no lawe  
 Of whom that he taketh eny hede,  
 But as Bayarde the blynde stede,  
 Tille he falle in the dicke amidde,  
 He goth ther no man wol him bidde.

13350—*thay*. The Lansd. MS. and Tyrwhitt read, *ye*.

13356—*Arnold*. Arnald de Villeneuve (in Lat. De Villa Nova, or Villanovanus) a distinguished French physician and alchemist of the fourteenth century, whose *Rosarius Philosophorum* was a text book for the alchemists of the following age.

As his Rosarie maketh mencioun,  
 He saith right thus, withouten eny lye;  
 Ther may no man Mercury mortifye,  
 But it be with his brother knowleching. 13360  
 Lo, how that he, which that first sayd this thing,  
 Of philosophres fader was, Hermes:  
 He saith, how that the dragoun douteles  
 He dyeth nought, but if that he be slayn  
 With his brother. And that is for to sayn,  
 By the dragoun, Mercury, and noon other,  
 He understood, and brimston be his brother,  
 That out of Sol and Luna were i-drawe.  
 "And therfore," sayde he, "take heed to my sawe:  
 Let no man besy him this art to seche, 13370  
 But if that he thentencioun and speche  
 Of philosophres understonde can;  
 And if he do, he is a lewed man.  
 For this sciens, and this connyng," quod he,  
 "Is of the Secré of secretz, pardé."

13361.—*Lo.* This word, which seems necessary to the sense, is not found either in MS. Harl. or in MS. Lansd.

13362.—*Hermes.* The treatise of the philosopher's stone, ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus, was popular in the Middle Ages; its author being supposed to have been the founder of the Hermetic philosophy.

13375.—*the Secré of secretz.* "He alludes to a treatise, entitled *Secreta Secretorum*, which was supposed to contain the sum of Aristotle's instructions to Alexander. See Fabric. Bibl. Gr. v. ii, p. 167. It was very popular in the Middle Ages. Ægidius de Columna, a famous divine and bishop, about the latter end of the thirteenth century, built upon it his book *De regimine principum*, of which our Occleve made a free translation in English verse, and addressed it to Henry V while prince of Wales. A part of Lydgate's translation of the *Secreta Secretorum* is printed in Ashmole's *Theat. Chem. Brit.* p. 397. He did not translate more than about half of it, being prevented by death. See MS. Harl 2251, and Tanner, *Bib. Brit.* in v. LYDGATE. The greatest part of the seventh book of Gower's *Conf. Amant.* is taken from this supposed work of Aristotle."—*Tyrwhitt.*



Also ther was a disciple of Plato,  
 That on a tyme sayde his maister to,  
 As his book Senior wil bere witnesse,  
 And this was his demaunde in sothfastnesse :  
 ‘Tel me the name of thilke privé stoon.’ 13380  
 And Plato answered unto him anon :  
 “Take the stoon that titanos men name.”  
 “Which is that?” quod he. “Magnasia is the same,”  
 Sayde Plato. “Ye, sire, and is it thus ?  
 This is *ignotum per ignotius*.  
 What is magnasia, good sir, I you pray ?”  
 “It is a water that is maad, I say,  
 Of elementes foure,” quod Plato.  
 “Telle me the rote, good sire,” quod he tho,  
 “Of that water, if it be your wille.” 13390  
 “Nay, nay,” quod Plato, “certeyn that I nylle.  
 The philosophres sworn were everichoon,  
 That thay ne scholde discovere it unto noon,  
 Ne in no book it write in no manere ;  
 For unto Crist it is so leef and deere,  
 That he wil not that it discovered be,  
 But wher it liketh to his deité  
 Man to enspire, and eek for to defende  
 Whom that him liketh ; lo, this is the ende.”  
 Than thus conclude I, syn that God of hevene 13400

---

13378—his book Senior. The Harl. and Lansd. MSS. read *Somer*. Tyrwhitt observes on this passage, “The book alluded to is printed in the *Theatrum Chemicum*, vol. v, p. 219, under this title: ‘Senioris Zadith fil. Hamuelis tabula chymica.’ The story which follows of Plato and his disciple, is there told (p. 249), with some variations, of Salomon. ‘Dixit Salomon rex, Recipe lapidem qui dicitur Thitarior. — Dixit sapiens, Assigna mihi illum. Dixit, est corpus magnesiæ—Dixit, Quid est magnesia? Respondit, Magnesia est aqua, composita, &c.’”

13389—rote. The Harl. MS. reads, *rooche*.

Ne wol not that the philosophres nevene,  
 How that a man schal come unto this stoon,  
 I rede as for the beste, let it goon.  
 For who so maketh God his adversarie,  
 As for to werke eny thing in contrarie  
 Unto his wil, certes never schal he thrive,  
 Though that he multiplie terme of al his lyve.  
 And ther a poynt; for ended is my tale.  
 God send every trewe man boote of his bale!

## THE DOCTOURES PROLOGE.

[“YE, let that passen,” quod oure hoste, “as now.  
 Sire Doctour of Physike, I praye you, . . .” 13111

*The Doctoures Prologe.* MS. Harl., with others of the best MSS., has no prologue to the tale of the Doctor of Physick. In two MSS. quoted by Tyrwhitt there is a mere colophon to the effect, *Here endeth the Frankeleyns Tale, and biginneth the Phisiciens Tale without a prologe.* Other MSS. have different prologues; that printed above is given by Tyrwhitt from one MS., but it is not much in Chaucer's style; the following, which is given in the Lansd. MS., is still less so:—

“Now trewly,” quod oure oste, “this a prati tale;  
 For litel merveile it is that thou lokest so pale,  
 Sethen thou hast medeled with so many thinges;  
 With bloweinge att the cole to melte bothe brochez and ringes,  
 And other many jewels dar I undertake,  
 And that thi lorde couthe us tel if we might him overtake.  
 Bot lat him go a devel waye, the compaigny is never the wers;  
 And al suche fals harlotes I sette not be hem a kers;  
 Bot latt pas overe nowe al thes subtilitees,  
 And sume worthi man tel us summe veritees,  
 As ye, worschipful maister of phisike,  
 Tellith us somme tale that is a cronyke,  
 That we may of yowe leren sum witte.”  
 Quod the maister of phisik, “A tale that I finde writte  
 In cronyke passed of olde tyme,  
 Herkeneth, for I wil tel it yow in rime.”

Tel us a tale of som honest matere."  
 "It schal be don, if that ye wol it here,"  
 Said this doctour, and his tale began anon.  
 "Now, good men," quod he, "herkeneth everichon."]

THE TALE OF THE DOCTOR OF PHISIK.

THER was, as telleth Titus Lyvius,  
 A knight, that cleped was Virginius,  
 Fulfild of honours and of worthines,  
 And strong of frendes, and of gret riches.  
 This knight a doughter hadde by his wyf, 13420  
 And never ne hadde he mo in al his lyf.  
 Fair was this mayde in excellent beauté  
 Above every wight that men may se :  
 For nature hath with sovereyn diligence  
 I-formed hir in so gret excellence,  
 As though sche wolde say, "Lo, I nature,  
 Thus can I forme and peynte a creature,  
 Whan that me lust; who can me counterfete ?  
 Pigmalion? nought, though he alwey forge and bete,  
 Or grave, or peynte: for I dar wel sayn, 13430  
 Apelles, Zeuxis, schulde wirche in veyn,

---

*The Tale of the Doctor of Phisik* It is hardly necessary to state that this tale is the common story of Virginius and his daughter, related, as here stated, by Livy, but a little modified in its details to suit medieval notions. Chaucer seems to have followed chiefly the version of the story given in his favourite book the *Roman de la Rose*, (vol. ii, p. 74 et seqq. ed. Meon.) and perhaps he had also in his eye Gower, who gives the story of Virginius in the seventh book of his *Confessio Amantis*.

13420—*This knight a doughter*. MSS. Harl. and Lansd. omit the first two words, and read the line, *A doughter he hadde by his wyf*.

13431—*Apelles, Zeuxis*. The Harl. and Lansd. MSS. read the names

Other to grave, or paynte, or forge or bete,  
 If thay presumed me to counterfete.  
 For he that is the former principal,  
 Hath maad me his viker general  
 To forme and peynte erthely creature  
 Right as me lust, al thing is in my cure  
 Under the moone that may wane and waxe.  
 And for my werke no thing wol I axe ;  
 My lord and I ben fully at accord. 13440  
 I made hir to the worschip of my lord ;  
 So do I alle myn other creatures,  
 What colour that thay been, or what figures."  
 Thus semeth me that nature wolde say.

This mayde was of age twelf yer and tway,  
 In which that nature hath suche delite.  
 For right as sche can peynte a lili white  
 And rody a rose, right with such peynture  
 Sche peynted hath this noble creature  
 Er sche was born, upon hir limes fre, 13450  
 Wheras by right such colours schulde be :  
 And Phebus deyed hadde hire tresses grete,  
 I-lyk to the stremes of his borned hete.  
 And if that excellent was hir beauté,  
 A thousand fold more vertuous was sche.  
 In hire ne lakketh no condicioun,

---

corruptly, *Appollus, Zepherus*. This reference to the painters of antiquity as well as most of the ideas relating to the personification and operations of nature, are taken from the *Roman de la Rose*. See vol.iii, p. 102,3. ed. Meon.

13451. I have in this line adopted Tyrwhitt's reading. The Harl. MS. reads, *Here als bright as such colour schulde be*. MS. Lansd. has the same reading.

That is to preyse, as by discrecioun.  
 As wel in body as goost chaste was sche :  
 For which sche floured in virginité,  
 With alle humilité and abstinence, 13460  
 With alle attemperaunce and pacience,  
 With mesure eek of beryng of array.  
 Discret sche was in answeyng alway,  
 Though sche were wis as Pallas, dar I sayn,  
 Hir facound eek ful wommanly and playn.  
 Noon countrefeted termes hadde sche  
 To seme wys ; but after hir degré  
 Sche spak, and alle hire wordes more and lesse  
 Sounyng in vertu and in gentillesse.  
 Schamefast sche was in maydenes schamfastnesse,  
 Constant in hert, and ever in besynesse, 13470  
 To dryve hire out of idel slogardye.  
 Bachus had of hir mouth no maistrye :  
 For wyn and thought doon Venus encrece,  
 As men in fuyr wil caste oyle or grece.  
 And of hir oughne vertu unconstreigned,  
 Sche hath ful ofte tyme hire seek y-feyned,  
 For that sche wolde fleen the companye,  
 Wher likly was to treten of folye,  
 As is at festes, reveles, and at daunces, 13480  
 That ben occasiouns of daliaunces.  
 Suche thinges maken children for to be

---

13474—*wyn and thought*. I have retained *wyn* instead of *wille*, which latter is the reading of the Harl. and Lansd. MSS. The sense would seem to require, as Tyrwhitt conjectures, *slouthe* instead of *thought*, but this reading is not found in the MSS. The Lansd. MS. reads with Tyrwhitt, *yowthe*.

To soone rype and bold, as men may se,  
 Which is ful perilous, and hath ben yore;  
 For al to soone may sche lerne lore  
 Of boldenesse, whan sche is a wyf.  
 And ye maystresses in youre olde lyf  
 That lordes doughtres han in governaunce,  
 Ne taketh of my word no displesaunce :  
 Thinketh that ye ben set in governynges 13490  
 Of lordes doughtres, oonly for tuo thinges;  
 Outher for ye han kept your honesté,  
 Other elles for ye han falle in freleté,  
 And knowe wel y-nough the olde daunce,  
 And conne forsake fully such meschaunce  
 For evermo: therfore, for Cristes sake,  
 Kepeth wel tho that ye undertake.  
 A theof of venisoun, that hath for-laft  
 His licorousnesse, and al his theves craft,  
 Can kepe a forest best of every man. 13500  
 Now kepe hem wel, for and ye wil ye can :  
 Loke wel, that ye unto no vice assent,  
 Lest ye be dampned for your wikked entent,  
 For who so doth, a traytour is certayn:  
 And taketh keep of that that I schal sayn;  
 Of al tresoun sovereyn pestilence  
 Is, whan a wight bytrayeth innocence.  
 Ye fadres, and ye modres eek also,  
 Though ye han children, be it oon or mo,

13497. This line is given from the Harl. and Lansd. MSS., instead of Tyrwhitt's reading, *To teche hem vertue loke that ye ne slake.*

13501—*kepe hem.* The Harl. MS. reads, *hir*, apparently incorrectly.

Youre is the charge of al her sufferaunce, 13510  
 Whiles thay be under your governaunce.  
 Beth war, that by ensample of youre lyvyng,  
 Outher by necgligence in chastisyng,  
 That thay ne perische : for I dar wel seye,  
 If that thay doon, ye schul ful sore abeye.  
 Under a schepherd softe and necligent,  
 The wolf hath many a schep and lamb to-rent.  
 Sufficeth oon ensample now as here,  
 For I moot turne agein to my matiere.

This mayde, of which I telle my tale expresse, 13520  
 So kept hir self, hir neded no maystresse ;  
 For in hir lyvyng maydens mighte rede,  
 As in a book, every good word and dede,  
 That longeth unto a mayden vertuous :  
 Sche was so prudent and so bounteous.  
 For which the fame outsprong on every syde  
 Bothe of hir beauté and hir bounté wyde :  
 That thurgh the lond thay praysed hir ilkoone,  
 That lovede vertu, save envye alloone,  
 That sory is of other mennes wele, 13530  
 And glad is of his sorwe and unhele.  
 The doctor made this descripcioun.  
 This mayde wente upon a day into the toun  
 Toward the temple, with hir moder decre,  
 As is of yonge maydenes the manere.

13510—*sufferaunce*. So the Harl. and Lansd. MSS. Tyrwhitt reads, *surveance*.

13532—*The doctor*. In the margin of a MS. quoted by Tyrwhitt this description of envy is ascribed to St. Augustine.

Now was ther than a justice in the toun,  
 That governour was of that regioun.  
 And so bifel, this juge his eyghen cast  
 Upon this mayde, avysing hir ful fast,  
 As sche cam forby ther the juge stood. 13540  
 Anoon his herte chaunged and his mood,  
 So was he caught with beauté of this mayde,  
 And to him self ful prively he sayde,  
 "This mayde schal be myn for any man."  
 Anoon the feend into his herte ran,  
 And taughte him sodeinly, that he by slighte  
 This mayde to his purpos wyne mighte.  
 For certes, by no fors, ne by no meede,  
 Him thought he was not able for to speede;  
 For sche was strong of frendes, and eek sche 13550  
 Conformed was in such soverayne beauté,  
 That wel he wist he might hir never wyne,  
 As for to make hir with hir body synne.  
 For which with gret deliberacioun  
 He sent after a clerk was in the toun,  
 The which he knew for subtil and for bold.  
 This juge unto the clerk his tale hath told  
 In secré wyse, and made him to assure,

---

13551—*conformed*....*beauté*. This is the reading of the Harl. and Lands. MSS. Tyrwhitt reads *confermed* and *bounté*, which seem to make a better sense.

13557—*clerk*. This is the reading of the Harl. and Lands. MSS. Tyrwhitt, who gives the reading *cherl*, says he took it from "the best MSS. and Ed. Ca. 2. The common Editt. have *client*. In the *Rom. de la R.* where this story is told, ver. 5815—5894, Claudius is called *Sergent* of Appius: and accordingly Chaucer a little lower, ver. 12204, calls him 'servant—unto—Appius.'" *Clerk* seems the better reading, as a *cherl* would hardly possess thralls or bondsmen.



He schulde telle it to no creature;  
And if he dede he schulde lese his heed. 13560

Whan that assented was this cursed reed,  
Glad was the juge, and made him gret cheere,  
And gaf him giftes precious and deere.

Whan schapen was al this conspiracye  
Fro poynt to poynt, how that his leccherie  
Parformed scholde be ful subtilly,

As ye schul here after-ward openly,  
Hom goth this clerk, that highte Claudius.

This false juge, that highte Apius,—

(So was his name, for it is no fable, 13570

But knowen for a storial thing notable;

The sentence of it soth is out of doute)—

This false jugge goth now fast aboute

To hasten his delit al that he may.

And so bifel, soone after on a day

This false juge, as telleth us the story,

As he was wont, sat in his consistory,

And gaf his domes upon sondry caas;

This false clerk com forth a ful good paas,

And saide: "Lord, if that it be your wille, 13580

As doth me right upon this pitous bille,

In which I pleyne upon Virginus.

And if he wile seyn it is nought thus,

I wil it prove, and fynde good witnesse,

That soth is that my bille wol expresse."

The juge answerd: "Of this in his absence

I may not give diffinityf sentence.

Let do him calle, and I wol gladly hieore;

Thou schalt have alle right, and no wrong heere."

Virginus com to wite the jugges wille, 13590

And right anon was red this cursed bille;

The sentence of it was as ye schul heere.

"To yow, my lord sire Apius so deere,

Scheweth youre pore servaunt Claudius,

How that a knight called Virginus,

Ageins the lawe, agens alle equityé,

Holdeth, expresse against the wille of me,

My servaunt, which that my thral is by right,

Which fro myn hous was stolen on a night

Whiles sche was ful yong, that wol I preve 13600

By witnesse, lord, so that ye yow not greve;

Sche is nought his doughter, what so he say.

Wherefore to yow, my lord the jugge, I pray,

Yelde me my thralle, if that it be your wille."

Lo, this was al the sentence of the bille.

Virginus gan upon the clerk byholde:

But hastily, er he his tale tolde,

And wolde have proved it, as schold a knight,

And eek by witnessyng of many a wight,

That al was fals that sayde his adversarie, 13610

This cursed juge wold no lenger tarye,

Ne heere a word more of Virginus,

But gaf his jugement, and saide thus:

'I deme anon this clerk his servaunt have.

Thou schalt no lenger in thin hous hir save.

Go bringe hir forth, and put hir in oure warde.

This clerk schal have his thral; thus I awarde."

And whan this worthy knight Virginius,  
 Thurgh thassent of this juge Apius,  
 Moste by force his deere doughter given 13620  
 Unto the juge, in lecchery to lyven,  
 He goth him hom, and sette him in his halle,  
 And leet anon his deere doughter calle:  
 And with a face deed as aisschen colde,  
 Upon hir humble face he gan byholde,  
 With fadres pité stiking thorough his herte,  
 Al wolde he from his purpos not converte.  
 "Doughter," quod he, "Virginia by name,  
 Ther ben tuo weyes, eyther deth or schame,  
 That thou most suffre, allas that I was bore! 13630  
 For never thou deservedest wherfore  
 To deyen with a swerd or with a knyf.  
 O deere doughter, ender of my lif,  
 Which I have fostred up with such plesaunce,  
 That thou nere never oute of my remembraunce:  
 O doughter, which that art my laste wo,  
 And in this lif my laste joye also,  
 O gemme of chastité in pacience  
 Tak thou thy deth, for this is my sentence;  
 For love and not for hate thou must be deed, 13640

---

13640—*For love. Rom. de la R. vol. ii, p. 77.*

*Car il par amors, sans haine,  
 A sa belle fille Virgine  
 Tantost a la teste copée,  
 Et puis au juge présentée  
 Devant tous en plain consistoire:  
 Et li juges, selonc l'estoire,  
 Le commanda tantost à prendre, etc.*

See below, v. 13670—3.

My pitous hond mot smyten of thin heed.  
 Allas that ever Apius the say!  
 Thus hath he falsly jugged the to day."  
 And told hir al the caas, as ye bifore  
 Han herd, it nedeth nought to telle it more.

"Mercy, deere fader," quod this mayde.  
 And with that word sche bothe hir armes layde  
 Aboute his nekke, as sche was want to doo,  
 (The teeres brast out of hir eyghen tuo),  
 And sayde: "Goode fader, schal I dye? 13650  
 Is ther no grace? is ther no remedye?"  
 "No, certeyn, deere doughter myn," quod he.  
 "Than geve me leve, fader myn," quod sche,  
 "My deth for to compleyne a litel space:  
 For pardy Jepte gaf his doughter grace  
 For to compleyne, er he hir slough, allas!  
 And God it woot, no thing was hir trespas,  
 But that sche ran hir fader first to se,  
 To welcome him with gret solempnité."  
 And with that word aswoun sche fel anoon, 13660  
 And after, whan hir swownyng was agoon,  
 Sche riseth up, and to hir fader sayde:  
 "Blessed be God, that I schal deye a mayde.  
 Geve me my deth, er that I have a schame.  
 Do with your child your wille, a goddes name!"  
 And with that word sche prayed him ful ofte,  
 That with his swerd he schulde smyte hir softe;

---

13655—*Jepte*. The Harl. and Lansd. MSS read, *Jeffa*. This reference to Jephtha's daughter is one of the anachronisms so common in the medieval poets, and which are found so late even as the age of Shakespeare.

And with that word on swoone doun sche fel.  
 Hir fader, with ful sorwful hert and fel,  
 Hir heed of smoot, and by the top it hente, 13670  
 And to the juge bigan it to presente,  
 As he sat in his doom in concistory.  
 And whan the juge it say, as saith the story,  
 He bad to take him, and honge him faste.  
 But right anoon alle the poeple in thraste  
 To save the knight, for routhe and for pité,  
 For knowen was the fals iniquité.  
 The poeple anoon had suspect in this thing,  
 By maner of this clerkes chalengyng,  
 That it was by thassent of Apius; 13680  
 That wiste wel that he was leccherous.  
 For which unto this Apius thay goon,  
 And casten him in prisoun right anoon,  
 Wher as he slough him self; and Claudius,  
 That servaunt was unto this Apius,  
 Was demed for to honge upon a tree;  
 But Virginius of his grete pité  
 Prayde for him, that he was exiled,  
 And elles certes he had ben bigiled:  
 The remenaunt were anchanged, more and lesse, 13690  
 That were consented to this cursednesse.

Her may men se how synne hath his merite:  
 Be war, for no man woot how God wol smyte  
 In no degré, ne in which maner wise  
 The worm of conscience wol agrise  
 Of wicked lyf, though it so pryvé be,  
 That no man woot of it but God and he:

Whether that he be lewed man or lered,  
 He not how soone that he may be afered.  
 Therefore I rede yow this counseil take, 13700  
 Forsakith synne, er synne yow forsake.

## THE PROLOGE OF THE PARDONER.

Owre ost gan swere as he were wood ;  
 " Harrow!" quod he, " by nayles and by blood !  
 This was a cursed thef, a fals justice.  
 As schendful deth, as herte can devise,  
 So falle upon his body and his boones !  
 The devel I bykenne him al at oones !  
 Allas ! to deere boughte sche hir beauté.  
 Wherfore I say, that alle men may se,  
 That giftes of fortune or of nature 13710  
 Ben cause of deth of many a creature.  
 Hir beauté was hir deth, I dar wel sayn ;  
 Allas ! so pitously as sche was slayn !  
 [Of bothe giftes, that I speke of now,  
 Men han ful often more for harm than prow.]  
 " But trewely, myn owne maister deere,  
 This was a pitous tale for to heere :  
 But natheles, pas over, this is no fors.  
 I pray to God to save thi gentil corps,

---

13706—*So falle, etc.* Instead of this and the following line, Tyrwhitt reads :—

Come to thisse juges and hir advocas.  
 Algate this sely maide is slain, alas!

13714.5. These two lines are omitted in the Harl. MS., and they seem superfluous. Tyrwhitt has made them up from more than one MS.

And eek thyn urinals, and thy jordanes, 13720  
 Thyn Ypocras, and eek thy Galianes,  
 And every boist ful of thi letuarie,  
 God blesse hem and oure lady seinte Marie !  
 So mot I then, thou art a propre man,  
 And y-lik a prelat, by saint Runyan.  
 Sayde I not wel ? can I not speke in terme ?  
 But wel I woot, thou dost myn herte erme,  
 I have almost y-caught a cardiale :  
 By corpus boones, but I have triacle,  
 Other elles a draught of moyst and corny ale, 13730  
 Other but I hieere anoon a mery tale,  
 Myn hert is brost for pité of that mayde.  
 Thow pardoner, thou *belamy*," he sayde,  
 "Tel us a tale, for thou canst many oon."  
 "It schal be doon," quod he, "and that anoon.  
 But first," quod he, "her at this ale-stake  
 I wil both drynke and byten on a cake."  
 But right anoon the gentils gan to crie,  
 "Nay, let him tellen us no ribaudye.  
 Tel us som moral thing, that we may leere." 13740  
 "Gladly," quod he, and sayde as ye schal heere.  
 "But in the cuppe wil I me bethinke  
 Upon som honest tale, whil I drinke."—  
 "Lordyngs," quod he, "in chirche whan I preche,

---

13720,1. These two lines are also omitted in the Harl. MS., but they seem necessary for the sense, and are given here from the Lansd. MS. For the explanation of the last of these two lines see the note on l. 433.

13741,2. Instead of these two lines, Tyrwhitt and the Lansd. MS. have,

Som wit, and thanne wol we gladly here.  
 I graunte y-wis, quod he, but I must thinke.

I peyne me to have an hauteyn speche,  
 And ryng it out, as lowd as doth a belle,  
 For I can al by rote that I telle.

My teeme is alway oon, and ever was :

*Radix malorum est cupiditas.*

“ First I pronounce whennes that I come, 13750  
 And thanne my bulles schewe I alle and some :

Oure liege lordes seal upon my patent,  
 That schewe I first my body to warent,  
 That no man be so hardy, prest ne clerk,  
 Me to destourbe of Cristes holy werk.

And after that than tel I forth my tales.

Bulles of popes, and of cardynales,  
 Of patriarkes, and of bisshops, I schewe,  
 And in Latyn speke I wordes fewe

To savore with my predicacioun, 13760

And for to stere men to devocioun.

Thanne schewe I forth my longe cristal stoonnes,  
 I-crammed ful of cloutes and of boones,  
 Reliks thay ben, as wene thei echoon.

Than have I in latoun a schulder boon,  
 Which that was of an holy Jewes scheep.

Good men,” say I, “ tak of my wordes keep :

If that this boon be waische in eny welle,

If cow, or calf, or scheep, or oxe swelle,

That eny worm hath ete, or worm i-stonge, 13770

Tak water of that welle, and waisch his tonge,

---

13749—*radix malorum*. The Harl. and Lansd. MSS. have *radix omnium malorum*, but the word *omnium* seems to be redundant, and spoils the metre.



And it is hool anoon : and forthermore  
 Of pokkes, and of scabbe, and every sore,  
 Schal every scheep be hool, that of this welle  
 Drynketh a draught ; tak heed eek what I telle.  
 If that the goode man, that the beest oweth,  
 Wol every wike, er that the cok him croweth,  
 Fastynge, drynke of this welle a draught,  
 As thilke holy Jew oure eldres taught,  
 His beestes and his stoor schal multiplie. 13780  
 And, sires, also it kelith jalousie.  
 For though a man be ful in jalous rage,  
 Let make with this water his potage,  
 And never schal he more his wyf mystrist,  
 Though he the soth of hir defaute wist ;  
 Al hadde sche take prestes tuo or thre.  
 Here is a meteyn eek, that ye may see :  
 He that his honde put in this metayn,  
 He schal have multiplying of his grayn,  
 Whan he hath sowed, be it whete or otes, 13790  
 So that ye offre pans or elles grootes,  
 And, men and wommen, oon thing warne I yow :  
 If eny wight be in this chirche now,  
 That hath doon synne orrible, that he  
 Dar nought for schame of it schryven be :  
 Or ony womman, be sche yong or old,  
 That hath y-maad hir housbond cokewold,  
 Such folk schal have no power ne grace  
 To offre to my relikes in this place.

---

13781—*kelith*. The Lansd. MS. has, with Tyrwhitt, *heleth*, which is perhaps the better reading.

And who so fint him out of suche blame, 13800  
Thay wol come up and offre in Goddes name,  
And I assoile hem by the auctorité,  
Which that by bulle was i-graunted me.

“By this gaude have I wonne every yeer  
An hundred mark, syn I was pardoner.  
I stonde lik a clerk in my pulpit,  
And whan the lewed poeple is doun i-set,  
I preche so as ye have herd-before,  
And telle hem an hondred japes more.  
Than peyne I me to strecche forth my necke, 13810  
And est and west upon the poeple I bekke,  
As doth a dowfe, syttyng on a berne :  
Myn hondes and my tonge goon so yerne,  
That it is joye to se my busynesse.  
Of avarice and of such cursednesse  
Is al my preching, for to make hem fre  
To geve here pans, and namely unto me.  
For myn entent is nought but for to wynne,  
And no thing for correccioun of synne.  
I rekke never when thay ben i-beryed. 13820  
Though that here soules gon a blakeberyed.

“For certes many a predicacioun  
Cometh ofte tyme of evel entencioun ;  
Som for plesauns of folk and flaterie,  
To ben avaunced by ypocrisie ;  
And som for veine gloir, and som for hate.  
For whan I dar not other weys debate,  
Than wil I styngé him with my tonge smerte  
In preching, so that he schal not asterte

To be diffamed falsly, if that he 13830  
 Hath trespass to my bretheren or to me.  
 For though I telle not his propre name,  
 Men schal wel knowe that it is the same  
 By signes, and by other circumstaunces.  
 Thus quyt I folk, that doon us displeasaunces :  
 Thus put I out my venym under hiewe  
 Of holynes, to seme holy and trewe.  
 But schortly myn entent I wol devyse,  
 I preche no thing but of coveityse.  
 Therfor my teem is yit, and ever was, 13840  
*Radix malorum est cupiditas.*

“ Thus can I preche agayn the same vice  
 Which that I use, and that is avarice.  
 But though my self be gulty in the synne,  
 Yit can I make other folk to twynne  
 From avarice, and soone to repent.  
 But that is not my principal entent ;  
 I preche no thing but for coveitise.  
 Of this matier it ought i-nough suffise.

“ Than telle I hem ensamples may oon 13850  
 Of olde thinges longe tyme agoon.  
 For lewed poeple loven tales olde ;  
 Which thinges can thay wel report and holde.  
 What ? trowe ye, whiles I may preche  
 And wyne gold and silver for I teche,  
 That I wil lyve in povert wilfully ?  
 Nay, nay, I thought it never trewely.  
 For I wol preche and begge in sondry londos.  
 I wil do no labour with myn hondes,

Ne make basketis and lyve therby, 13860  
 Bycause I wil nought begge ydelly.  
 I wol noon of thapostles counterfete :  
 I wol have money, wolle, chese, and whete,  
 Al were it geven of the prestes page,  
 Or of the porest wydow in a village,  
 And schold hir children sterve for famyn.  
 Nay, I wol drinke licour of the wyn,  
 And have a joly wenche in every toun.  
 But herkneth, lordynges, in conclusioun,  
 Youre likyng is that I schal telle a tale. 13870  
 Now have I dronk a draught of corny ale,  
 By God, I hope I schal telle yow a thing,  
 That schal by resoun be at your liking :  
 For though my self be a ful vicious man,  
 A moral tale yit I yow telle can,  
 Which I am wont to preche, for to wynne.  
 Now hold your pees, my tale I wol byginne."

## THE PARDONERES TALE.

In Flaundres whilom was a companye  
 \* Of yonge folkes, that haunted folye,  
 As ryot, hasard, stywes, and tavernes ; 13880  
 Wher as with lutes, harpes, and gyternes,

---

13864—*prestes page*. The Lansd. MS reads *porest page*, which is the reading adopted by Tyrwhitt.

*The Pardoneres Tale*. This beautiful moral story appears to have been taken from a fabliau, now lost, but of which the outline is preserved in the *Cento Novelle Antiche*, Nov. lxxxii, as well as the story itself by Chaucer.

Thay daunce and play at dees bothe day and night,  
 And ete also, and drynk over her might;  
 Thurgh which thay doon the devyl sacrifice  
 Withinne the develes temple, in cursed wise,  
 By superfluité abhominable.  
 Her othes been so greet and so dampnable,  
 That it is grisly for to hiere hem swere.  
 Our blisful lordes body thay to-tere;  
 Hem thoughte Jewes rent him nought y-nough; 13890  
 And ech of hem at otheres synne lough.  
 And right anon ther come tombesteris  
 [Fetis and smale, and yonge fruitesteres,  
 Singers with harpes, baudes, wafereres,]  
 Whiche that ben verray develes officeres,  
 To kyndle and blowe the fuyr of leccherie,  
 That is anexid unto glotonye.  
 The holy wryt take I to my witnesse,  
 That luxury is in wyn and dronkenesse.  
 Lo, how that dronken Loth unkyndely 13900  
 Lay by his doughtres tuo unwityngly,  
 So dronk he was he niste what he wrought.  
 Herodes, who so wel the story sought,  
 Whan he of wyn was repleet at his fest,

13889—*to-tere*. The common oaths in the Middle Ages were by the different parts of God's body; and the popular preachers represented that profane swearers tore Christ's body by their imprecations.

13893,4. These two lines are omitted in the Harl. MS.

13898—*holy wryt*. MS. Harl. and others have in the margin the reference, ¶ *Nolite inebriare vino, in quo est luxuria*.

13900—*drunken Loth*. This transgression of Lot is one of the most favourite examples, in the medieval moralists, of the ill-consequences of drunkenness. Compare *Piers Ploughman*, l. 512, *et seqq.*

Right at his oughne table gaf his hest  
 To sle the baptist Johan ful gilteles.  
 Seneca seith a good word douteles :  
 He saith he can no difference fynde  
 Betuyx a man that is out of his mynde,  
 And a man the which is dronkelewe : 13910  
 But that woodnes, fallen in a schrewe,  
 Persevereth lenger than doth dronkenesse.

O glutonye, ful of corsidnesse ;  
 O cause first of oure confusioun,  
 O original of oure dampnacioun,  
 Til Crist had bought us with his blood agayn !  
 Loketh, how dere, schortly for to sayn,  
 Abought was first this cursed felonye :  
 Corrupt was al this world for glotonye.  
 Adam our fader, and his wyf also, 13920  
 Fro Paradys to labour and to wo  
 Were dryven for that vice, it is no drede.  
 For whils that Adam fasted, as I rede,  
 He was in Paradis, and whan that he  
 Eet of the fruyt defendit of a tre,  
 He was out cast to wo and into peyne.  
 O glotony, wel ought us on the pleyne !  
 O, wist a man how many maladyes  
 Folwith of excesse and of glotonyes,

13907—*Seneca*. "Perhaps he refers to Epist lxxxiii. *Extende in plures dies illum ebrii habitum: nunquid de furore dubitatis? nunc quoque non est minor sed brevior.*"—*Tyrwhitt*.

13918—*felonye*. The Lansd. MS. reads, with Tyrwhitt, *vilanie*.

13923—*whils that Adam*. In the margin of MS. Harl. is the quotation, *Quamdiu jejunavit Adam in Paradyso fuit, comedit et ejectus est; statim duxit uxorem, etc.* It is from *Hieronymus contra Jovinianum*.

He wolde be the more mesurable 13930  
 Of his diete, sitting at his table.  
 Allas ! the schorte throte, the tendre mouth,  
 Maketh that Est and West, and North and South,  
 In erthe, in watir, in ayer, man to swynke,  
 To gete a sely glotoun mete and drynke.  
 Of this matier, O Poul, wel canstow trete.  
 Mete unto wombe, and wombe unto mete,  
 Schal God destroyen bothe, as Powel saith.  
 Allas ! a foul thing is it by my faith  
 To say this word, and fouler is the dede, 13940  
 Whan men so drynke of the whyt and rede,  
 That of his throte he makith his privé  
 Thurgh thilke cursed superfluité.  
 Thapostil wepyng saith ful pitously,  
 Ther walkith many, of which you told have I,  
 I say it now wepyng with pitous vois,  
 Thay are enemyes of Cristes croys :  
 Of which the ende is deth, wombe is her God.  
 O wombe, o bely, o stynkyng is thi cod,  
 Fulfild of long and of corrupeoun ; 13950  
 Ateyther ende of the foul is the soun.  
 How gret cost and labour is the to fynde !  
 These cokes how they stamp, and streyn, and grynde,  
 And torne substaunce into accident,  
 To fulfille thy licorous talent !

13937—*Mete unto wombe*. The margin of the Harl. MS. has the quotation, *Escave nris et venter escis, Deus autem hunc et illam destruet*, etc.

13944—*Thapostil saith*. *Philipp.* iii, 18, 19, *Multi enim ambulantes, quos scire dicebam vobis (nunc autem et fletus dico) inimicos crucis Christi: quorum finis interitus, quorum deus venter est.*

Out of the harde boones gete thay  
 The mary, for thay caste nought away  
 That may go thurgh the golet softe and soote :  
 Of spicery and levys, barke and roote,  
 Schal ben his sause maad to his delyt 13960  
 To make him have a newe appetit.  
 But certes he that haunteth suche delices,  
 Is deed ther, whiles that he lyveth in vices.  
 A licorous thing is wyn, and dronkenesse  
 Is ful of stryvyng and of wrecchednesse.  
 O dronke man, disfigured is thi face,  
 Sour is thy breth, foul artow to embrace :  
 And thurgh thi dronkenesse sowneth the soun,  
 As though thou seydest ay, Sampson, Sampson :  
 And yit, God wot, Sampson drank never wyn. 13970  
 Thow fallist, as it were a stiked swyn :  
 Thy tonge is lost, and al thin honest cure,  
 For dronkenes is verray sepulture  
 Of mannes witt and his discrecioun.  
 In whom that drynk hath dominacioun,  
 He can no counseil kepe, it is no drede.  
 Ne keep yow from the white and from the rede,  
 And namely fro the white wyn of Leepe,

---

13968—*drunkenesse*. Tyrwhitt has *drunken nose*, which is perhaps the better reading.

13978—*white wyn of Leepe*. "According to the geographers, Lepe was not far from Cadiz. This wine, of whatever sort it may have been, was probably much stronger than the Gascon wines, usually drunk in England. La Rochelle and Bordeaux, the two chief ports of Gascony, were both, in Chaucer's time, part of the English dominions. Spanish wines might also be more alluring upon account of their greater rarity. Among the Orders of the Royal Household, in 1604, is the following. (MS. Harl. 293, fol. 162) 'And whereas, in tymes past, Spanish



That is to selle in Fleetstreet or in Chepe.  
 This wyn of Spayne crepith subtilly 13980  
 In other wynes growyng faste by,  
 Of which ther riseth such fumosité,  
 That whan a man hath dronke draughtes thre,  
 And weneth that he be at hom in Chepe,  
 He is in Spayne, right at the toun of Lepe,  
 Nought at the Rochel, ne at Burdeaux toun;  
 And thanne wol thai say, Sampson, Sampson.  
 But herken, lordyngs, o word, I you pray,  
 That alle the soverayn actes, dar I say,  
 Of victories in the Olde Testament, 13990  
 That thurgh the verray God omnipotent  
 Were doon in abstinence and in prayere:  
 Lokith the Bible, and ther ye may it hier.  
 Loke Atthila, the grete conquerour,  
 Deyd in his sleep, with schame and dishonour,  
 Bleedyng ay at his nose in dronkenesse:  
 A captayn schuld ay lyve in sobrenesse.  
 And over al this, avyse yow right wel,  
 What was comaunded unto Lamuel;  
 Nought Samuel, but Lamuel say I. 14000

---

wines, called sacke, were little or noe whit use in our courto, and that in later years, though not of ordinary allowance, it was thought convenient, that noblemen, etc. might have a boule or glass, etc. We understanding that it is now used as common drinke, etc., reduce the allowance to twelve gallons a day for the court, etc."—*Tyrwhitt*.

13979—*Fleetstreet*. So the Harl. MS. The Lansd. MS. reads *Fische-strete*, which is the reading adopted by Tyrwhitt.

13993—*hier*. The Lansd. MS. and Tyrwhitt have, *lere*.

13994—*Atthila*. Attila died in the night suffocated by an hæmorrhage, brought on by a debauch, in the year 468, when he was preparing for a new invasion of Italy.

Redith the Bible, and fyndeth expresly  
 Of wyn geving to hem that han justice.  
 No more of this, for it may wel suffice.  
 And now that I have spoke of glotonye,  
 Now wil I yow defende hasardrye.

Hasard is verray moder of lesynges,  
 And of deceipt, and cursed forsweringes:  
 Blaspheme of Crist, manslaughter, and wast also  
 Of catel, and of tyme; and forthermo  
 It is reproef, and contrair of honour, 14010  
 For to be halde a comun hasardour.  
 And ever the heyer he is of astaat,  
 The more is he holden desolaat.  
 If that a prince use hasardrie,  
 In alle governance and policie  
 He is, as by comun opinioun,  
 Holde the lasse in reputacioun.  
 Stilbon, that was a wis embasitour,  
 Was sent unto Corinthe with gret honour  
 Fro Lacidome, to make hir alliaunce: 14020  
 And whan he cam, him happede *par chaunce*,  
 That alle the grettest that were of that lond  
 Playing atte hasard he hem fond.

---

14001—*Redith the Bible*. See *Proverbs* xxiii.

14020 — *Lacidome*. The Lansdowne MS. reads *Calidonye*, and Tyrwhitt adopts *Calidone* in his text, but he observes in the note, "John of Salisbury, from whom our author probably took this story and the following, calls him *Chilon*. Polycrat. lib. i, c. 5. Chilon Lacedæmonius, iugendæ societatis causa missus Corinthum, duces et seniores populi ludentes invenit in alea. Infecto itaque negotio reversus est, &c. Accordingly in ver. 14020, MS. C. l. reads very rightly *Lacedomye* instead of *Calidone*, the common reading. Our author has before used *Lacedomie* for *Lacedæmon*."

For which, as soone as it mighte be,  
 He stal him hoom agein to his contré,  
 And saide ther: "I nyl nought lese my name,  
 I nyl not take on me so gret diffame,  
 Yow for to allie unto noon hasardoures.  
 Sendeth som other wise embasitoures,  
 For by my trouthe, me were lever dye, 14030  
 Than I yow scholde to hasardours allye.  
 For ye, that ben so glorious in honoures,  
 Schal not allie yow with hasardoures,  
 As by my wil, ne as by my treté."  
 This wise philosophre thus said he.

Lo eek how that the king Demetrius  
 The king of Parthes, as the book saith us,  
 Sent him a paire dees of gold in scorn,  
 For he had used hasard ther to-forn:  
 For which he held his gloir and his renoun 14040  
 At no valieu or reputacioun.  
 Lordes may fynde other maner play  
 Honest y-nough to dryve away the day.

Now wol I speke of othes fals and greto  
 A word or tuo, as other bookes entrete.  
 Gret swering is a thing abhominable,  
 And fals swering is more reprovale.  
 The hyhe God forbad sweryng at al,  
 Witnes on Mathew: but in special  
 Of sweryng saith the holy Jeremye, 14050  
 Thou schalt say soth thin othes, and not lye;

---

14038—*hasard*. This is Tyrwhitt's reading, supported by the *Lansd.* MS. which reads *hasardry*. The *Harl.* MS. reads *tavern*, which does not agree so well with the context.

And swere in doom, and eek in rightwisnes;  
 But ydel sweryng is a cursednes.  
 Bihold and se, ther in the firste table  
 Of hihe Goddes heste honorable,  
 How that the secounde heste of him is this:  
 Tak not in ydel my name or amys.  
 Lo, rather he forbedith such sweryng,  
 Than homicide, or many a corsed thing.  
 I say that as by order thus it stondith; 14060  
 This knoweth he that the hestes understondeth,  
 How that the second hest of God is that.  
 And forthermore, I wol the telle a plat,  
 That vengeance schal not parte fro his hous,  
 That of his othes is outrageous.  
 "By Goddes precious hert, and by his nayles,  
 And by the blood of Crist, that is in Hayles,  
 Seven is my chaunce, and also cink and tray!  
 By Goddes armes, and thou falsly play,  
 This daggere schal thurgh thin herte goo!" 14070

---

14066—*his nayles*. Not his finger nails, but the nails with which he was nailed to the cross. These were objects of superstition in the Middle Ages. Sir John Maundeville, c. vii, says, "And thereby in the walle is the place where the four nayles of oure Lord weren hidd; for he had two in his hondes, and two in his feet; and of on of theise the emperour of Constantynoble made a brydille to his hors, to bere him in bataylle; and thorghe vertue thereof he overcam his enemyes, &c." He had said before, c. ii. that "on of the nayles that Crist was naylled with on the cros," was at Constantynoble; and "on in France, in the kinges chapelle."

14067—*blood...in Hayles*. "The abbey of Hailes, in Gloucestershire, was founded by Richard king of the Romans, brother to Henry III. This precious relick, which was afterwards commonly called 'the blood of Hailes,' was brought out of Germany by the son of Richard, Edmund, who bestowed a third part of it upon his father's abbey of Hailes, and some time after gave the other two parts to an abbey of his own foundation, at Ashrug, near Berkhamsted. Hollinsh. v. ii. p. 275."  
 —*Tyrwhitt*.

This fruyt cometh of the bicchid boones tuo,  
 Forswering, ire, falsnes, homicide.

Now for the love of Crist that for us dyde,  
 Levith youre othis, bothe gret and smale.  
 But, sires, now wol I telle forth my tale.

These riottoures thre, of which I telle,  
 Longe erst than prime rong of eny belle,  
 Were set hem in a tavern for to drynke:  
 And as thay sat, thay herd a belle clinke  
 Biforn a corps, was caried to the grave: 14080

That oon of hem gan calle unto his knave,  
 "Go bet," quoth he, "and axe redily,  
 What corps is that, that passeth her forthby:  
 And loke that thou report his name wel."

"Sire," quod he, "but that nedeth never a del;  
 It was me told er ye com heer tuo houres;  
 He was, pardy, an old felaw of youre,  
 And sodeinly he was i-slayn to night;  
 For-dronk as he sat on his bench upright,  
 Ther com a privé thef, men clepen Deth, 14090  
 That in this contré al the peple sleth.  
 And with his spere he smot his hert a-tuo,  
 And went his way withoute wordes mo.

14071—*bicchid boones*. This is the general reading of the manuscripts, and Tyrwhitt acted unadvisedly in changing it to *bicchel*. *Bicchid bones* appears to have been not an uncommon term for dice: in the Towneley mystery of the *Processus Talentorum*, where the executioners are deciding their right to Christ's tunic by throwing the dice, one of them (p. 241), who has lost, exclaims,—

I was falsly begyld wythe thise *byched bones*,  
 Ther cursyd thay be!

He hath a thousand slayn this pestilence.

And, maister, er ye come in his presence,

Me thinketh that it is ful necessarie,

For to be war of such an adversarie:

Beth redy for to meete him evermore.

Thus taughte me my dame, I say nomore."

"By seinte Mary!" sayde this taverner, 14100

"The child saith soth; for he hath slayn this yeer,

Hens over a myle, withinne a gret village,

Bothe man and womman, child, and hyne, and page;

I trowe his habitacioun be there.

To ben avysed gret wisdom it were,

Er that he dede a man that dishonour."

"Ye, Goddis armes!" quod this ryottour,

"Is it such peril with him for to meete?

I schal him seeke by way and eek by strete.

I make avow to Goddis digne boones! 14110

Herkneth, felaws, we thre ben al oones:

Let ech of us hold up his hond to other,

And ech of us bycome otheres brother,

And we wil slee this false traitour Deth:

He schal be slayne, that so many sleeth,

By Goddis digneté, er it be night!"

Togideres han these thre here trouthes plight

To lyve and deye ech of hem with other,

As though he were his oughne sworne brother.

14103—*and hyne*. I have inserted these two words, which are not in MSS. Harl. and Lansd., from Tyrwhitt; they appear necessary to complete the line.

14119—*sworne*. Tyrwhitt reads *boren*, but he does not appear to have been aware of the frequency of this sworn fraternity in medieval story.

And up thai startyn, al dronke in this rage, 14120  
And forth thai goon towards that village,  
Of which the taverner hath spoke biforn,  
And many a grisly oth than han thay sworn,  
And Cristes blessed body thay to-rent ;  
Deth schal be deed, if that they may him hent.  
Right as thay wolde have torned over a style,  
Whan thai han goon nought fully a myle,  
An old man and a pore with hem mette.  
This olde man ful mekely hem grette,  
And saide thus: " Lordynges, God yow se!" 14130  
The proudest of the ryotoures thre  
Answerd agein, " What? carle, with sory grace,  
Why artow al for-wrapped save thi face?  
Whi lyvest thou so longe in so gret age?"  
This olde man gan loke on his visage,  
And saide thus: " For that I can not fynde  
A man, though that I walke into Inde,  
Neither in cité noon, ne in village,  
That wol chaunge his youthe for myn age;  
And therfore moot I have myn age stille 14140  
As longe tyme as it is Goddes wille.  
And deth, allas! ne wil not have my lif.  
Thus walk I lik a resteles caytif,  
And on the ground, which is my modres gate,  
I knokke with my staf, erly and late,  
And saye, ' Leeve moder, let me in.  
Lo, how I wane, fleisch, and blood, and skyn.  
Allas! whan schuln my boones ben at rest?  
Moder, with yow wil I chaunge my chest,

That in my chamber longe tyme hath be, 11150  
Ye, for an haire clout to wrap in me.  
But yet to me sche wol not do that grace,  
For which ful pale and welkid is my face.  
But, sires, to yow it is no curtesye  
To speke unto an old man vilonye,  
But he trespas in word or elles in dede.  
In holy writ ye may your self wel rede,  
Agens an old man, hoor upon his hede,  
Ye schold arise: wherfor I yow rede,  
Ne doth unto an old man more harm now, 14160  
Namore than ye wolde men dede to yow  
In age, if that ye may so long abyde.  
And God be with you, wherso ye go or ryde!  
I moot go thider as I have to goo."  
"Nay, olde cherl, by God! thou schalt not so,"  
Sayde that other hasardour anoon;  
"Thou partist nought so lightly, by seint Johan!  
Thou spak right now of thilke traitour Deth,  
That in this contré alle oure frendes sleth;  
Have her my trouth, as thou art his aspye, 14170  
Tel wher he is, or elles thou schalt dye,  
By God and by that holy sacrament!  
For sothly thou art oon of his assent  
To slen us yonge folk, thou false thief."  
"Now, sires, than if that yow be so leef  
To fynde Deth, torn up this croked way,  
For in that grove I laft him, by my fay!  
Under a tree, and ther he wil abyde;  
Ne for your bost he nyl him no thing hyde.



Se ye that ook? right ther ye schuln him fynde. 14180  
 God save yow, that bought agein mankynde,  
 And yow amend." Thus sayde this olde man,  
 And everich of these riotoures ran,  
 Til thay come to the tre, and ther thay founde  
 Of florins fyn of gold y-coyned rounde,  
 Wel neygh a seven bussheles, as hem thought.  
 No lenger thanne after Deth thay sought;  
 But ech of hem so glad was of that sight,  
 For that the florens so faire were and bright,  
 That down thai sette hem by that precious hord. 14190  
 The yongest of hem spak the firste word.  
 "Bretheren," quod he, "take keep what I schal say;  
 My witte is gret, though that I bourde and play.  
 This tresour hath fortune to us given  
 In mirth and jolyté our lif to lyven,  
 And lightly as it comth, so wil we spende.  
 Ey, Goddis precious dignité! who wende  
 To day, that we schuld have so fair a grace?  
 But might this gold be caried fro this place  
 Hom to myn hous, or ellis unto youres, 14200  
 (For wel I wot that this gold is nought oures),  
 Than were we in heyh felicité.  
 But trewely by day it may not be;  
 Men wolde say that we were theves stronge,  
 And for oure tresour doon us for to honge.  
 This tresour moste caried be by night  
 As wysly and as slely as it might.

---

14186—a seven bussheles. So MSS. Harl. and Lansd. Tyrwhitt reads, an eighte bussheles.

Wherfore I rede, that cut among us alle  
We drawe, and let se wher the cut wil falle:  
And he that hath the cut, with herte blithe 14210  
Schal renne to the toun, and that ful swithe,  
And bring us bred and wyn ful prively:  
And tuo of us schal kepe subtilly  
This tresour wel: and if he wil not tarie,  
Whan it is night, we wol this tresour carie  
By oon assent, ther as us liketh best."

That oon of hem the cut brought in his fest,  
And bad hem drawe and loke wher it wil falle,  
And it fel on the yongest of hem alle:  
And forth toward the toun he went anoon. 14220  
And al so soone as he was agoon,  
That oon of hem spak thus unto that other:  
"Thow wost wel that thou art my sworne brother,  
Thy profyt wol I telle the anoon.  
Thow wost wel that our felaw is agoon,  
And her is gold, and that ful gret plenté,  
That schal departed be among us thre.  
But natheles, if I can schape it so,  
That it departed were bitwix us tuo,  
Had I not doon a frendes torn to the?" 14230  
That other answerd: "I not how that may be:  
He wot wel that the gold is with us tway.  
What schulde we than do? what schuld we say?"  
"Schal it be counsail?" sayde the ferste schrewe,  
"And I schal telle the in wordes fewe  
What we schul doon, and bringe it wel aboute."  
"I graunte," quod that other, "withoute doute,

That by my trouthe I wil the nought bywray."

"Now," quod the first, "thou wost wel we ben tway,  
And two of us schuln strengre be than oon. 14240

Lok, whanne he is sett, thou right anon  
Arys, as though thou woldest with him pleye;  
And I schal ryf him thurgh the sydes tweye,  
Whils that thou strogelest with him as in game,  
And with thi dagger loke thou do the same;  
And than schal al the gold departed be,  
My dere frend, bitwixe the and me:

Than may we oure lustes al fulfille,  
And play at dees right at our owne wille."  
And thus accorded ben these schrewes twayn, 14250  
To sle the thridde, as ye herd me sayn.

This yongest, which that wente to the toun,  
Ful fast in hert he rollith up and doun  
The beauté of the florins newe and bright:  
"O Lord!" quod he, "if so were that I might  
Have al this gold unto my self alloone,  
Ther is no man that lyveth under the troone  
Of God, that schulde lyve so mery as I."  
And atte last the feend oure enemy  
Put in his thought, that he schuld poyssoun beye, 14260  
With which he mighte sle his felaws tweye.  
For why, the feend fond him in such lyvyng,  
That he had leve to sorwe him to brynge.  
For this witterly was his ful entent  
To slen hem bothe, and never to repent.  
And forth he goth, no lenger wold he tary,  
Into the toun unto a potecary,

And prayde him that he him wolde selle  
Som poysoun, that he might his rattis quelle.  
And eek ther was a polkat in his hawe, 14270  
That, as he sayde, his capouns had i-slawe :  
And said he wold him wreke, if that he might,  
On vermyyn, that destroyed him by night.  
Thapotecary answerd : “ And thou schalt have  
A thing that, also God my soule save,  
In al this world ther nys no creature,  
That ete or dronk had of this confecture,  
Nought but the mountaunce of a corn of whete,  
That he ne schuld his lif anon for-lete ;  
Ye, sterve he schal, and that in lasse while, 14280  
Than thou wilt goon a paas not but a myle ;  
The poysoun is so strong and violent.”  
This cursed man hath in his hond i-hent  
This poysoun in a box, and sins he ran  
Into the nexte stret unto a man,  
And borwed of him large botels thre ;  
And in the two his poysoun poured he ;  
The thrid he keped clene for his drynke,  
For al the night he schop him for to swynke  
In caryng the gold out of that place. 14290  
And whan this riotour, with sory grace,  
Hath fillid with wyn his grete botels thre,  
To his felaws agein repaireth he.

What nedith it therof to sermoun more ?  
For right as thay had cast his deth bifore,  
Right so thay han him slayn, and that anon.  
And whan this was i-doon, thus spak that oon ;

"Now let us drynk and sitte, and make us mery  
And siththen we wil his body bery."

And afterward it happed him *par cas*, 14300

To take the botel ther the poysoun was,  
And drank, and gaf his felaw drink also,  
For which anon thay sterved bothe tuo.

But certes I suppose that Avycen  
Wrot never in canoun, ne in non fen,  
Mo wonder sorwes of empoisonyng,  
Than hadde these wrecches tuo or here endyng.  
Thus endid been these homicides tuo,  
And eek the fals empoysoner also.

O cursed synne ful of cursednesse! 14310

O traytorous homicidy! O wikkednesse!

O glotony, luxurie, and hasardrye!

Thou blasphemour of Crist with vilanye,  
And othes grete, of usage and of pride!  
Allas! mankynde, how may it bytyde,  
That to thy creatour, which that the wrought,  
And with his precious herte-blood the bought,  
Thou art so fals and so unkynde, alas!

"Now, good men, God forgeve yow your trespas,  
And ware yow fro the synne of avarice. 14320

Myn holy pardoun may you alle warice,  
So that ye offren noblis or starlinges,  
Or elles silver spones, broches, or rynges.

14304—*Avycen*. The Harl. MS. reads, *Amycen*. Avicenna was one of the most distinguished physicians of the Arabian school of the eleventh century, and enjoyed great popularity in the Middle Ages.

Bowith your hedes under this holy bulle.  
 Cometh forth, ye wyves, and offreth your wolle;  
 Your names I entre her in my rolle anoon;  
 Into the blis of heven schul ye goon;  
 I yow assoile by myn heyh power,  
 If ye woln offre, as clene and eek als cler  
 As ye were born. And, sires, lo, thus I preche; 14330  
 And Jhesu Crist, that is oure soules leche,  
 So graunte yow his pardoun to receyve;  
 For that is best, I wil not yow disceyve.  
 " But, sires, o word forgot I in my tale;  
 I have reliks and pardoun in my male,  
 As fair as eny man in Engelond,  
 Which were me geve by the popes hond.  
 If eny of yow wol of devocioun  
 Offren, and have myn absolucioun,  
 Cometh forth anon, and knelith her adoun, 14340  
 And ye schul have here my pardoun.  
 Or elles takith pardoun, as ye wende,  
 Al newe and freissch at every townes ende,  
 So that ye offren alway new and newe  
 Nobles and pens, which that ben good and trewe.  
 It is an honour to every that is heer,  
 That ye may have a suffisaunt pardonere  
 Tassoile yow in contré as ye ryde,  
 For aventures which that may bytyde.

---

14341—*And ye schul have here.* Tyrwhitt reads, *And meekly receiveth.*  
 The Lansd. MS. reads this and following line on a different rhyme,—

Commeth for anone, and kneleth adowne here,  
 And ye schal have my pardon that is dere.

For paraunter ther may falle oon, or tuo, 14350

Doun of his hors, and breke his nekke a-tuo.

Loke, such a seureté is to you alle

That I am in your felaschip i-falle,

That may assoyle you bothe more and lasse,

Whan that the soule schal fro the body passe.

I rede that oure hoste schal bygynne,

For he is most envolipid in synne.

Com forth, sire ost, and offer first anoon,

And thou schalt kisse the reliquis everichoon,

Ye, for a grote; unbocle anon thi purs." 14360

"Nay, nay," quod he, "than have I Cristes curs!

Let be," quod he, "it schal not be, so theech.

Thou woldest make me kisse thin olde breech,

And swere it were a relik of a seynt,

Though it were with thy foundement depeynt.

But by the cros, which that seynt Heleyn fond,

I wold I had thy coylons in myn hond,

In stede of reliks, or of seintuary.

Let cut hem of, I wol help hem to cary;

Thay schul be schryned in an hogges tord." 14370

This Pardoner answerde nat o word;

So wroth he was, he wolde no word say.

"Now," quod oure host, "I wol no lenger play

With the, ne with noon other angry man."

But right anoon the worthy knight bygan,

(Whan that he saugh that al the peple lough)

"No more of this, for it is right y-nough.

Sir Pardoner, be glad and mery of choere;

And ye, sir host, that ben to me so decore,

I pray yow that ye kisse the Pardoner ; 14380  
 And, Pardoner, I pray yow draweth yow ner,  
 And as we dede, let us laugh and play."  
 Anon thay kisse, and riden forth her way.

## THE SCHIPMANNES PROLOGE.

[Our hoste upon his stirrops stode anon,  
 And saide, "Good men, herkeneth everichon,  
 This was a thrifty tale for the nones,  
 Sire parish preest," quod he, "for Goddes bones,  
 Tell us a tale, as was thy forward yore :  
 I see wel that ye lerned men in lore  
 Can mochel good, by Goddes dignitee." 14390

The Person him answerd : "*Benedicite* !  
 What eileth the man, so sinfully to swere ?"

---

*The Schipmannes Prologe.* The Shipman's tale has no prologue in the Harl. MS., and in other of the best copies of the Canterbury Tales. The prologue here given is from Tyrwhitt, who observes,—“The tale of the Shipman in the best MSS. has no prologue. What has been printed as such in the common editions is evidently spurious. To supply this defect I have ventured, upon the authority of one MS. (and, I confess, not one of the best) to prefix to this tale the prologue, which has usually been prefixed to the tale of the Squier. As this prologue was undoubtedly composed by Chaucer, it must have had a place somewhere in this edition, and if I cannot prove that it was really intended by him for this place, I think the reader will allow that it fills the vacancy extremely well. The Pardoner's tale may very properly be called a *thrifty tale*, and he himself a *learned man* (ver. 14475,8); and all the latter part, though highly improper in the mouth of the *curteis Squier*, is perfectly suited to the character of the Shipman.” The following short and doggerel prologue to the Shipman's Tale, from the Lansd. MS., is given only as an example of the way in which different persons attempted to supply the deficiencies in Chaucer's unfinished work :—

Bot than spak oure oste unto maister Schipman,  
 “Maister,” quod he, “to us summe tale tel ye can,  
 Wherewithe ye myght glad al this company,  
 If it were youre plesenge, I wote wele sekurlye.”  
 “Sertes,” quod this Schipman, “a tale I can telle,  
 And therefore herkeneth hynderward how that I will spelle.”



Our hoste answerd: "O Jankin, be ye there?  
 Now, good men," quod our hoste, "herkneth to me.  
 I smell a loller in the wind," quod he.  
 "Abideth for Goddes digne passion,  
 For we schul han a predication:  
 This loller here wol prechen us somewhat."  
 "Nay by my fathers soule! that schal he nat."  
 Sayde the Schipman, "here schal he nat preche,  
 He schal no gospel glosen here ne teche. 14401  
 We leven al in the gret God," quod he.  
 "He wolden sown som difficultee,  
 Or springen cockle in our clene corne.  
 And therefore, hoste, I warne thee beforne,  
 My joly body schal a tale telle,  
 And I schal clinken you so mery a belle,  
 That I schal waken al this compaignie:  
 But it schal not ben of philosophie,  
 Ne of physike, ne termes queinte of lawe; 14410  
 Ther is but litel Latin in my mawe."]

#### THE SCHIPMANNES TALE.

A MARCHAUNT whilom dwelled at Seint Denys,  
 That riche was, for which men hild him wys.

14395—a loller. This is in character, as appears from a treatise of the time. *Harl. Catal.* n. 1666. "Now in Engelond it is a comun protection ayens presecutiouns—if a man is customable to swere nedeles and fals and unavisd, by the bones, nailes, and sides and other members of Crist.—And to absteyne fro othes nedeles and unlcful,—and repreve sinne by way of charite, is mater and cause now, why prelates and some lordes sclaudren men, and clepen hem *lollards*, *cretikes*, etc."—*Tyrphitt*.

14404—Or springen cockle. This alludes to a punning derivation of *Lollard*, from the Latin *lolium*.

*The Schipmannes Tale.* In this tale also Chaucer probably gives an English version of an earlier French *fabliau*. The same story probably

A wyf he had of excellent beauté,  
 And companable, and reverent was sche;  
 Which is a thing that causeth more despence,  
 Than worth is al the cher and reverence,  
 That men doon hem at festes or at daunces.  
 Such salutaciouns and continuaunces  
 Passeth, as doth the schadow on a wal: 14420  
 But wo is him that paye moot for al.  
 The sely housbond algaht moste pay,  
 He most us clothe in ful good array  
 Al for his oughne worschip richely:  
 In which array we daunce jolily.  
 And if that he may not, paraventure,  
 Or elles wil not such dispens endure,  
 But thynketh it is wasted and i-lost,  
 Than moot another paye for oure cost,  
 Or lene us gold, that is perilous. 14430

This worthy marchaunt huld a noble hous,  
 For which he hadde alday gret repair  
 For his largesce, and for his wyf was fair.  
 What wonder is? but herkneth to my tale.

Amonges al these gestes gret and smale,  
 Ther was a monk, a fair man and a bold,  
 I trowe, thritty wynter he was old,  
 That ever in oon was drawyng to that place.  
 This yonge monk, that was so fair of face,  
 Aqueynted was so with the goode man, 14440  
 Sith that her firste knowleche bygan,  
 That in his hous as familier was he,

---

formed the groundwork in the first story in the *Eighth Day of the Decameron*, which differs little from Chaucer's tale, and was frequently imitated by subsequent *conteurs*.

As it possibil is a frend to be.

And for as mochil as this goode man

And eek this monk, of which that I bygan,

Were bothe tuo i-born in oon village,

The monk him claymeth, as for cosynage;

And he agein him saith nat oones nay,

But was as glad therof, as foul of day;

For to his hert it was a gret plesaunce.

11450

Thus ben thay knyht with eterne alliaunce,

And ilk of hem gan other to assure

Of brotherhed, whil that her lif may dure.

Fre was daun Johan, and namely of despence

As in that hous, and ful of diligence

To do plesaunce, and also gret costage :

He nought forgat to geve the leste page

In al that hous ; but, after her degré,

He gaf the lord, and siththen his meyné,

Whan that he com, som maner honest thing ;

11460

For which thay were as glad of his comyng

As foul is fayn, whan that the sonne upriseth.

No mor of this as now, for it suffiseth.

But so bifel, this marchaunt on a day

Schop him to make redy his array

Toward the toun of Bruges for to fare,

To byen ther a porcioun of ware :

For which he hath to Paris sent anoon

A messanger, and prayed hath dan Johan

11454—*namely*. I have adopted this reading from the Lansl. MS. and Tyrwhitt, as giving apparently the best sense. The Harl. MS. reads, *manly*.

11466—*Bruges*. Bruges was the grand central mart of European commerce in the Middle Ages, until its decline in consequence of the wars and troubles of the sixteenth century.

That he schuld come to Seint Denys, and play 14470  
 With him, and with his wyf, a day or tway,  
 Er he to Brigges went, in alle wise.  
 This nobil monk, of which I yow deryse,  
 Hath of his abbot, as him list, licence,  
 (Bycause he was a man of heih prudence,  
 And eek an officer out for to ryde,  
 To se her graunges and her bernys wyde);  
 And unto Seint Denys he cometh anon.  
 Who was so welcome as my lord dan Johan,  
 Oure deere cosyn, ful of curtesie? 14480  
 With him brought he a jubbe of Malvesie,  
 And eek another ful of wyn vernage,  
 And volantyn, as ay was his usage:  
 And thus I lete hem ete, and drynk, and play,  
 This marchaunt and his monk, a day or tway.

The thridde day this marchaund up he riseth,  
 And on his needes sadly him avyseth:  
 And up into his countour hous goth he,  
 To rekyn with him self, as wel may be,  
 Of thilke yer, how that it with him stood, 14490  
 And how that he dispended had his good,  
 And if that he encresced were or noon.  
 His bookes and his bagges many oon  
 He hath byforn him on his counter bord,  
 For riche was his tresor and his hord;  
 For which ful fast his countour dore he schette;  
 And eek he wolde no man schold him lette

---

14483—*volantyn*. So the Harl. MS. The Lansd. MS. has *volatile*, which is the reading adopted by Tyrwhitt, and is probably the correct one.

Of his accomptes, for the mene tyme :  
And thus he sat, til it was passed prime.

Dan Johan was risen in the morn also, 14500  
And in the gardyn walkith to and fro,  
And hath his thinges said ful curteisly.  
This good wyf com walkyng ful prively  
Into the gardyn, ther he walketh softe,  
And him salueth, as sche hath doon ful ofte.  
A mayde child com in hir compaignie,  
Which as hir list sche may governe and gye,  
For yit under the yerde was the mayde.  
“ O dere cosyn myn, dan Johan,” sche sayde,  
“ What ayleth yow so rathe to arise?” 14510  
“ Nece,” quod he, “ it aught y-nough suffise  
Fyve houres for to slepe upon a night :  
But it were for eny old palled wight,  
As ben these weddid men, that lye and dare,  
As in a forme lith a wery hare,  
Were al for-straught with houndes gret and smale.  
But, dere nece, why be ye so pale ?  
I trowe certis, that oure goode man  
Hath on yow laborid, sith the night bygan,  
That yow were nede to resten hastiliche.” 14520  
And with that word he lowgh ful meriliche,  
And of his owne thought he was al reed.

This faire wyf bygan to schake hir heed,  
And sayde thus : “ Ye, God wot al,” quod sche.  
“ Nay, cosyn myn, it stant not so with me.  
For by that God, that gaf me soule and lif,  
In al the reme of Fraunce is ther no wyf  
That lasse lust hath to that sory play ;

For I may synge allas and waylaway  
 That I was born, but to no wight," quod sche, 14530  
 "Dar I not telle how it stont with me.

Wherfor I think out of this lond to wende,  
 Or elles of my self to make an ende,  
 So ful am I of drede and eek of care."

This monk bygan upon this wif to stare;  
 And sayd: "Allas! my nece, God forbede,  
 That ye for eny sorw, or eny drede,  
 For-do your self: but telleth me your greef,  
 Paraventure I may in youre mescheef  
 Councel or help: and therfor telleth me 14540  
 Al your annoy, for it schal be secré.  
 For on my portos here I make an oth,  
 That never in my lif, for lief ne loth,  
 Ne schal I of no counseil you bywray."

"The same agein," quod sche, "to yow I say.  
 By God and by this portos wil I swere,  
 Though men me wolde al in peces tere,  
 Ne schal I never, for to go to helle,  
 Bywreye word of thing that ye me telle,  
 Not for no cosynage, ne alliaunce, 14550  
 But verrayly for love and affiaunce."  
 Thus ben thay sworn, and herupon i-kist,  
 And ilk of hem told other what hem list.

"Cosyn," quod sche, "if that I had a space,  
 As I have noon, and namly in this place,  
 Then wold I telle a legend of my lyf,  
 What I have suffred sith I was a wyf  
 With myn housbond, though he be your cosyn."

“Nay,” quod this monk, “by God and seint Martyn!  
He is no more cosyn unto me, 14560  
Than is this leef that hongeth on the tre:  
I cleped him so, by seint Denis of Fraunce,  
To have the more cause of acqueyntaunce  
Of yow, which I have loved specially  
Aboven alle wommen sikerly;  
This swere I yow on my professioun.  
Tellith youre greef, lest that he come adoun,  
And hasteth yow; and goth your way anoon.”  
“My deere love,” quod sche, “o dan Johan,  
Ful leef me were this counseil for to hyde, 14570  
But out it moot, I may no more abyde.  
Myn housbond is to me the worste man,  
That ever was siththe the world bigan:  
But sith I am a wif, it sit nought me  
To telle no wight of oure priveté,  
Neyther a bedde, ne in noon other place;  
God schilde I scholde telle it for his grace.  
A wyf ne schal not say of hir housbonde  
But al honour, as I can understonde.  
Save unto yow thus moche tello I schal: 14580  
As help me God, he is nought worth at al,  
In no degré, the valieu of a flie.  
But yit me greveth most his nigardye.  
And wel ye wot, that wymmen naturelly  
Desiren sixe thinges, as wel as I.  
They wolde that here housbondes scholde be

---

14566. This line is omitted in MS. Harl. and is here given from MS. Lansdowne.

Hardy, and wys, and riche, and therto fre,  
 And buxom to his wyf, and freisch on bedde.  
 But by the Lord that for us alle bledde,  
 For his honour my selven to array, 14590  
 A sonday next comyng yit most I pay  
 An hundred frank, or elles I am lorn.  
 Yit were me lever that I were unborn,  
 Than me were doon a sclaunder or vilenye.  
 And if myn housbond eek might it espie,  
 I ner but lost; and therfor I yow pray  
 Lene me this summe, or elles mot I dey.  
 Dan Johan, I seye, lene me this hundred frankes;  
 Pardé I wil nought faile yow my thanks,  
 If that yow list to do that I yow pray. 14600  
 For at a certein day I wol yow pay,  
 And do to yow what pleasaunce and servise  
 That I may do, right as you list devyse:  
 And but I do, God take on me vengeance,  
 As foul as hadde Geneloun of Fraunce!"

This gentil monk answard in this manere:

"Now trewely, myn owne lady deere,  
 I have on yow so gret pité and reuthe,  
 That I yow swere, and plighte yow my treuthe,  
 Than whan your housbond is to Flaundres fare, 14610  
 I schal deliver yow out of youre care,

---

14597-14600. These four lines are also omitted in the Harl. MS, by an evident error of the scribe, arising from a similar termination of lines 14596 and 14600. They are here supplied from the Lansd. MS.

14605—*Geneloun*. Geneloun, or Ganelon, in the old romances, was the person whose treason led to the disastrous battle of Roncesvalles.



For I wol bringe yow an hundred frankes."  
 And with that word he caught hir by the schankes,  
 And hir embraced hard, and kist hir ofte.  
 "Goth now your way," quod he, "al stille and softe,  
 And let us dyne as sone as ye may,  
 For by my chilindre it is prime of day :  
 Goth now, and beth as trew as I schal be."  
 "Now elles God forbede, sire!" quod sche.  
 And forth sche goth, as joly as a pye, 14620  
 And bad the cookes that thai schold hem hye,  
 So that men myghte dyne, and that anoon.  
 Up to hir housbond this wif is y-goon,  
 And knokketh at his dore boldely.  
 "*Quy est là?*" quod he. "Peter! it am I,"  
 Quod sche. "How longe, sire, wol ye fast?  
 How longe tyme wol ye reken and cast  
 Your sommes, and your bokes, and your thinges?  
 The devel have part of alle such rekenynges.  
 Ye have i-nough pardy of Goddes sonde. 14630  
 Com down to day, and let your bagges stonde.  
 Ne be ye not aschamed, that daun Johan  
 Schal alday fastyng thus elenge goon?  
 What? let us hiere masse, and gowe dyne."  
 "Wif," quod this man, "litel canstow divine  
 The curious besynesse that we have :  
 For of us chapmen, al so God me save,  
 And by that lord that cleped is seint Ive,

---

14617—*chilindre*. This is the reading of the Harl. and Lansd. MSS. Tyrwhitt has substituted *kalender*.

Scarsly amonges twelve, two schuln thrive  
 Continuelly, lastyng into her age. 14640  
 We may wel make cheer and good visage,  
 And dryve forth the world, as it may be,  
 And kepen our estat in priveté,  
 Til we be deed, or elles that we play  
 A pilgrimage, or goon out of the way.  
 And therfor have I gret necessité  
 Upon this queynte world to avyse me.  
 For evermor we moste stond in drede  
 Of hap and fortun in our chapmanhede.  
 To Flaundres wil I go to morw at day, 14650  
 And come agayn as soone as I may :  
 For which, my deere wif, I the byseeke  
 As be to every wight buxom and meeke,  
 And for to kepe oure good be curious,  
 And honestly governe wel our hous.  
 Thou hast y-nough, in every maner wise,  
 That to a thrifty housbond may suffise.  
 The lakketh noon array, ne no vitaille ;  
 Of silver in thy purs thou mayst not faile."  
 And with that word his countour dore he schitte, 14660  
 And down he goth ; no lenger wold he lette ;  
 And hastily a masse was ther sayd,  
 And spedily the tables were i-layd,

---

14639—*twelve, two*. This is the reading of the Harl. and Lansd. MSS., except that the latter has *tweyne* for *two*. Tyrwhitt reads, *amonges twenty, ten*.

14640—*her*. The Lansd. MS. reads, *our*.

14657—*housbond*. This is the reading of the Harl. and Lansd. MSS. Tyrwhitt reads, *houshold*. I think the reading of the MSS. is the best—thou hast enough money, consistent with a thrifty husband.

And to the dyner faste thay hem spedde,  
And rychely this chapman the monk fedde.

And after dyner daun Johan sobrelly  
This chapman took on part, and prively  
Sayd him thus : " Cosyn, it stondeth so,  
That, wel I se, to Brigges wol ye go ;  
God and seint Austyn spede you and gyde. 14670

I pray yow, cosyn, wisly that ye ryde ;  
Governeth yow also of your diete  
Al temperelly, and namely in this hete.  
Bitwix us tuo nedeth no straunge fare ;  
Far wel, cosyn, God schilde you fro care.  
If eny thing ther be by day or night,  
If it lay in my power and my might,  
That ye wil me comaunde in eny wise,  
It schal be doon, right as ye wol devyse.  
O thing er that ye goon, if it might be, 14680

I wolde pray yow for to lene me  
An hundred frankes for a wyke or tweye,  
For certeyn bestis that I moste beye,  
To store with a place that is oures :  
(God help me so, I wolde it were youre !)  
I schal not faile seurly of my day,  
Nought for a thousand frankes, a myle way.  
But let this thing be secré, I yow pray ;  
For for the bestis this night most I pay.  
And fare now wel, myn owne cosyn deere. 14690  
Graunt mercy of your cost and of your cheore."

This noble méchaunt gentilly anon  
Answerd and sayde : " O cosyn daun Johan,

Now sikerly this is a smal request :  
My gold is youres, whanne that yow lest,  
And nought oonly my gold, but my chaffare :  
Tak what yow liste, God schilde that ye spare !  
But oon thing is, ye know it wel y-nough  
Of chapmen, that her money is here plough.  
We may creaunce whils we have a name, 14700  
But goldles for to be it is no game.  
Pay it agayn, whan it lith in your ese ;  
After my might ful fayn wold I yow plesse."

This hundred frankes he fet forth anoon,  
And prively be took hem to daun Johan :  
No wight in al this world wist of this loone,  
Savyng this marchaund, and daun Johan alloone.  
Thay drynke, and speke, and rome a while and play,  
Til that dan Johan rydeth to his abbay.  
The morwe cam, and forth this marchaund rideth  
To Flaundres-ward, his prentis wel him gydeth, 14711  
Til that he cam to Brigges merily.  
Now goth this marchaund faste and busily  
Aboute his neede, and bieth, and creaunceth ;  
He neither pleyeth atte dys, ne daunceth ;  
But as a marchaund, schortly for to telle,  
He lad his lyf, and ther I let him dwelle.

The sonday next the marchaund was agoon,  
To Seint Denys i-come is daun Johan,  
With croune and berd al freisch and newe i-schave.  
In al the hous ther nas so litel a knave, 14721  
Ne no wight elles, that he nas ful fayn,  
For that my lord dan Johan was come agayn.

And schortly to the poynte for to gon,  
This faire wif acordith with dan Johan,  
That for these hundred frank he schuld al night  
Have hir in his armes bolt upright :  
And this acord parformed was in dede.  
In mirth al night a bisy lif thay lede  
Til it was day, that dan Johan went his way, 14780  
And bad the meigné far wel, have good day.  
For noon of hem, ne no wight in the toun,  
Hath of dan Johan noon suspeccioun ;  
And forth he rideth hom to his abbay,  
Or wher him list, no more of him I say.

This marchaund, whan that ended was the faire,  
To Seynt Denys he gan for to repeire,  
And with his wif he maketh fest and cheere,  
And tellith hir that chaffar is so deere,  
That needes most he make a chevisaunce, 14740  
For he was bounde in a reconisaunce,  
To paye twenty thousand scheldes anoon.  
For which this marchaund is to Paris goon,  
To borwe of certeyn frendes that he hadde  
A certein frankes, and some with him he ladde.  
And whan that he was come into the toun,  
For gret chiertee and gret affeccioun  
Unto dan Johan he first goth him to play ;  
Nought for to borwe of him no kyn monay,  
But for to wite and se of his welfare, 14750

---

14742—*scheldes*. The literal version of the French *écus*, or crowns. They are said to have received their name from bearing the figure of a shield on one side.

And for to telle him of his chaffare,  
 As frendes doon, whan thay ben met in fere.  
 Dan Johan him maketh fest and mery cheere;  
 And he him told agayn ful specially,  
 How he had bought right wel and graciously  
 (Thanked be God!) al hole his marchaundise:  
 Save that he most in alle manere wise  
 Maken a chevysauns, as for his best:  
 And than he schulde be in joye and rest.  
 Dan Johan answerde, " Certis I am fayn, 14760  
 That ye in hele are comen hom agayn:  
 And if that I were riche, as have I blisse,  
 Of twenty thousand schold schuld ye not mysse,  
 For ye so kyndely this other day  
 Lente me gold; and as I can and may  
 I thanke yow, by God and by seint Jame.  
 But natheles I took it to oure dame,  
 Youre wif at home, the same gold agein  
 Upon your bench, sche wot it wel certeyn,  
 By certein toknes that I can hir telle. 14770  
 Now by your leve, I may no lenger duelle;  
 Oure abbot wol out of this toun anoon,  
 And in his compaignye moot I goon.  
 Grete wel oure dame, myn owen nece swete,  
 And far wel, dere cosyn, til that we meete."  
 This marchaund, which that was bothe war and wys,

---

14756—*hole*. I have added this word from the Lansd. MS. It is omitted in the Harl. MS.

14768—*at home*. These words also are added from the Lansd. MS. as being evidently necessary to complete the metre.

Creaunced hath, and payed eek in Parys  
 To certeyn Lombardes redy in hir hond  
 This somme of gold, and took of hem his bond,  
 And hom he goth, as mery as a popinjay. 14780  
 For wel he knew he stood in such array,  
 That needes most he wyne in that viage  
 A thousand frankes, above al his costage.  
 His wyf ful redy mette him at the gate,  
 As sche was wont of old usage algate :  
 And al that night in mirthe thay ben sette,  
 For he was riche, and clerly out of dette.  
 Whan it was day, this marchaund gan embrace  
 His wyf al newe, and kist hir on hir face,  
 And up he goth, and maketh it ful tough. 14790  
 "No more," quod sche, "by God, ye have y-nough :"  
 And wantounly with him sche lay and playde,  
 Til atte laste thus this marchaund sayde :  
 "By God," quod he, "I am a litel wroth  
 With yow, my wyf, although it be me loth :  
 And wite ye why? by God, as that I gesse,  
 Ye han i-maad a maner straungenesse  
 Bitwixe me and my cosyn dan Johan.  
 Ye schold have warned me, er I had goon,  
 That he yow had an hundred frankes payd 14800

---

14778—*Lombardes*. It is scarcely necessary to inform the reader that the Lombard merchants were the chief money dealers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, after the Jews had been placed under a ban. Lombard Street in London seems to have preserved traditionally the peculiar character given to it by its former inhabitants from whom it was named.

By redy tokne: and huld him evil appayd  
 For that I to him spak of chevysaunce,  
 (Me semed so as by his countenaunce):  
 But natheles, by God of heven king!  
 I thoughte nought to axe him no thing.  
 I pray the, wif, do thou no more so.  
 Tel me alway, er that I fro the go,  
 If eny dettour have in myn absence  
 I-payed the, lest in thy necgligence  
 I may him axe a thing that he hath payed.”

14810

This wyf was not affered ne affrayed,  
 But boldely sche sayde, and that anoon;  
 “ Mary! I diffy that false monk, dan Johan,  
 I kepe not of his tokenes never a del:  
 He took me a certeyn gold, that wot I wel.  
 What? evel thedom on his monkes snowte!  
 For, God it wot! I wende withoute doute,  
 That he had geve it me, bycause of yow,  
 To do therwith myn honour and my prow,  
 For cosynage, and eek for *bele cheer*  
 That he hath had ful ofte tyme heer.  
 But synnes that I stonde in this disjoynt,  
 I wol answer yow schortly to the poynt.  
 Ye han mo slakke dettours than am I:  
 For I wol pay yow wel and redily  
 Fro day to day, and if so be I faile,  
 I am your wif, score it upon my taile,  
 And I schal paye it as soone as I may.  
 For by my trouthe, I have on myn array,  
 And nought on wast, bistowed it every del.

14820

14830



And for I have bistowed it so wel  
 For youre honour, for Goddes sake I say,  
 As beth nought wroth, but let us laugh and play ;  
 Ye schul my joly body have to wedde :  
 By God, I wol not pay yow but on bedde :  
 Forgeve it me, myn owne spouse deere ;  
 Turne hider-ward and make better cheere."

This marchaund saugh noon other remedy :  
 And for to chide, it nas but foly,  
 Sith that the thing may not amendid be. 14840  
 "Now, wif," he sayde, "and I forgive it the ;  
 And by thi lif, ne be no more so large ;  
 Keep better my good, this give I the in chargo."  
 Thus endeth now my tale, and God us sende  
 Talyng y-nough, unto our lyves ende !"

#### THE PRIORESSES PROLOGE.

"WEL sayd, by corpus boones!" quod oure host,  
 "Now longe mot thou sayle by the cost,  
 Sir gentil maister, gentil mariner.  
 God give the monk a thousand last quade yer.  
 Haha ! felaws, be war for such a jape. 14850  
 The monk put in the mannes hood an ape,  
 And in his wyves eek, by seint Austyn.  
 Draweth no monkes more unto your in.  
 But now pas over, and let us loke aboute,  
 Who schal now telle first of al this route  
 Another tale : " and with that word he sayde,  
 As curteisly as it had ben a mayde,

" My lady Prioress, by your leve,  
 So that I wist I scholde yow not greve,  
 I wolde deme, that ye telle scholde 14860  
 A tale next, if so were that ye wolde.  
 Now wol ye vouche sauf, my lady deere ?"  
 " Gladly," quod sche, and sayd in this manere.

## THE PRIORESSES TALE.

O LORD, oure lord, thy name how mervelous  
 Is in this large world i-sprad ! (quod sche)  
 For nought oonly thy laude precious  
 Parformed is by men of heih degré,  
 But by mouthes of children thy bounté  
 Parformed is; on oure brest soukyng  
 Som tyme schewe thay thin heriyng. 14870

Wherefore in laude, as I best can or may,  
 Of the and of thy white lily flour,  
 Which that the bar, and is a mayde alway,  
 To telle a story I wil do my labour ;  
 Nought that I may encresce youre honour,  
 For sche hir silf is honour and roote  
 Of bounté, next hir sone, and soules boote.

O moodir mayde, o mayde mooder fre,  
 O bussh unbrent, brennyng in Moises sight,

---

*The Prioresses Tale.* The subject of this story was a very popular legend in the middle ages, told in a variety of forms, and located in as many different places, but tending and perhaps intended to keep up a strong prejudice against the Jews. It is not necessary to enumerate them.

14864—*O Lord, oure lord.* This is a translation of the first words of the eighth Psalm, *Domine, dominus noster, etc.*

That ravysshedest down fro the deité, 14880  
 Thurgh thin humblesse, the gost that in the alight :  
 Of whos vertu, he in thin herte pight,  
 Conceyved was the fadres sapience :  
 Help me to telle it in thy reverence.

Lady, thi bounté, and thy magnificence,  
 Thy vertu and thi gret humilité,  
 Ther may no tonge expres in no science :  
 For som tyme, lady, er men pray to the,  
 Thow gost biforn of thy benignité,  
 And getist us the light, thurgh thy prayere, 14890  
 To gyden us the way to thy sone so deere.

My connyng is so weyk, o blisful queene,  
 For to declare thy grete worthinesse,  
 That I may not this in my wyt susteene ;  
 But as a child of twelf month old or lesse,  
 That can unnethes eny word expresse,  
 Right so fare I, and therfor I you pray,  
 Gydeþ my song, that I schal of yow say.

Ther was in Acy, in a greet citee,  
 Amonges Cristen folk a Jewerye, 14900  
 Susteyned by a lord of that contré,  
 For foul usure, and lucre of felonye,  
 Hateful to Crist, and to his compaignye :  
 And thurgh the strete men might ride and wende,  
 For it was fre, and open at everich ende.

14898—*Gydeþ*. The Harl. MS. has *endeth*.

14899—*Acy*. The Lansd. MS. reads, *Acc*. Tyrwhitt *Asie*, i.e. Asia.

14902—The Lansd. MS. and Tyrwhitt have *vilanye*. Those two words are not unfrequently interchanged in the MSS.

A litel scole of Cristen folk ther stood  
 Doun at the forther ende, in which ther were  
 Children an heep y-comen of Cristen blood,  
 That lered in that scole yer by yere  
 Such maner doctrine as men used there : 14910  
 This is to say, to synge and to rede,  
 As smale childer doon in her childhede.

Among these children was a widow sone,  
 A litel clergeoun, that seve yer was of age,  
 That day by day to scole was his wone,  
 And eek also, wherso he saugh thymage  
 Of Cristes moder, had he in usage,  
 As him was taught, to knele adoun, and say  
 His *Ave Maria*, as he goth by the way.

Thus hath this widow hir litel child i-taught 14920  
 Oure blisful lady, Cristes moder deere,  
 To worschip ay, and he forgat it nought :  
 For cely child wil alway soone leere.  
 But ay whan I remembre of this matiere,  
 Seint Nicholas stont ever in my presence,  
 For he so yong to Crist dede reverence.

This litel child his litel book lernynge,  
 As he sat in the scole in his primere,  
 He *O alma redemptoris* herde synge,  
 As children lerned her antiphonere : 14930

---

14925—*Seint Nicholas*. We have an amusing account of the very early piety of this saint in his lesson, *Brev. Roman.* vi Decemb. "Cujus viri sanctitas, quanta futura esset, jam ab incunabulis apparuit. Nam infans, cum reliquis dies lac nutricis frequens sugeret, quarta et sexta feria (on Wednesdays and Fridays) semel duntaxat, idque vesperi, sugebat."

And as he durst, he drough him ner and neere,  
 And herkned ever the wordes and the note,  
 Til he the firste vers couthe al by rote.

Nought wist he what this Latyn was to say,  
 For he so yong and tender was of age ;  
 But on a day his felaw gan he pray  
 To expoune him the song in his langage,  
 Or telle him what this song was in usage :  
 This prayd he him to construe and declare,  
 Ful often tyme upon his knees bare. 14940

His felaw, which that elder was than he,  
 Answerd him thus : "This song, I have herd seye,  
 Was maked of our blisful lady fre,  
 Hire to saluen, and eek hire to preye  
 To ben our help and socour whan we deye.  
 I can no more expoune in this matere :  
 I lerne song, I can no more gramer."

"And is this song i-maad in reverence  
 Of Cristes moder?" sayde this innocent;  
 "Now certes I wol do my diligence 14950  
 To conne it al, er Cristemasse be went,  
 Though that I for my primer schal be schent,  
 And schal be betyn thries in an hour,  
 I wol it conne, oure lady to honoure."

His felaw taught him hom-ward prively  
 From day to day, til he couthe it by rote,  
 And than he song it wel and boldely ;  
 Twyes on the day it passed thurgh his throte,

---

14947—*no more gramer.* The Lansd. MS. and Tyrwhitt read, *but smal grammere.*

From word to word accordyng with the note,  
 To scole-ward and hom-ward whan he went : 14960  
 On Cristes moder was set al his entent.

As I have sayd, thurghout the Jewrye  
 This litel child as he cam to and fro,  
 Ful merily than wold he synge and crie,  
*O alma redemptoris*, evermo :

The swetnes hath his herte persed so  
 Of Cristes moder, that to hir to pray  
 He can not stynt of syngyng by the way.

Oure firste foo, the serpent Sathanas,  
 That hath in Jewes hert his waspis nest, 14970  
 Upswal and sayde : " O Ebreik peple, allas !  
 Is this a thing to yow that is honest,  
 That such a boy schal walken as him lest  
 In youre despyt, and synge of such sentence,  
 Which is agens your lawes reverence ?"

Fro thennesforth the Jewes han conspired  
 This innocent out of this world to enchace :  
 An homicide therto han thay hired,  
 That in an aley had a privé place ;  
 And as the childe gan forthby to pace, 14980  
 This false Jewe him hent, and huld ful faste,  
 And kut his throte, and in a put him caste.

I say in a wardrobe thay him threw,  
 Wher as the Jewes purgen her entraile.  
 O cursed folk, o Herodes al newe,  
 What may your evyl entente you availe?

---

14982—*and in a put him caste.* This is the reading of the Lansd. MS.  
 The Harl. MS. reads, *and threw him in atte laste.*

Morther wol out, certeyn it wil nought faile,  
And namly ther thonour of God schuld sprede :  
The blood out crieth on your cursed dede.

“ O martir sondit to virginité, 14990

Now maystow synge, folwyng ever in oon  
The white lomb celestial,” quod sche,  
“ Of which the grete evaungelist seint Johan  
In Pathmos wroot, which seith that thay that goon  
Bifore the lamb, and synge a song al newe,  
That never fleischly wommen thay ne knewe.”

This pore widowe wayteth al this night  
After this litel child, but he cometh nought :  
For which as soone as it was dayes light,  
With face pale, in drede and busy thought, 15000  
Sche hath at scole and elles wher him sought,  
Til fynally sche gan of hem aspye,  
That he was last seyn in the Jewerie.

With moodres pité in hir brest enclosed,  
Sche goth, as sche were half out of hir mynde,  
To every place, wher sche hath supposed  
By liklihede hir child for to fynde :  
And ever on Cristes mooder meke and kynde  
Sche cried, and atte laste thus sche wrought,  
Among the cursed Jewes sche him sought. 15010

Sche freyned, and sche prayed pitously  
To every Jew that dwelled in that place,  
To telle hir, if hir child wente ther by :  
Thay sayden nay ; but Jhesu of his grace  
Gaf in hir thought, withinne a litel space,  
That in that place after hir sone sche cryde,

Wher as he was cast in a put bysyde.

O grete God, that parformedist thin laude  
By mouth of innocentz, lo, here thy might!

This gemme of chastité, this emeraude, 15020  
And eek of martirdom the ruby bright,  
Ther he with throte y-corve lay upright,  
He *Alma redemptoris* gan to synge  
So lowde, that al the place bigan to rynge.

The Cristen folk, that thurgh the strete went,  
In comen, for to wonder upon this thing:  
And hastily for the provost thay sent.  
He cam anoon, withoute taryng,  
And heriede Crist, that is of heven king,  
And eek his moder, honour of mankynde, 15030  
And after that the Jewes let he bynde.

This child with pitous lamentacioun  
Up taken was, syngyng his song alway:  
And with honour of gret processioun,  
Thay caried him unto the next abbay.  
His modir swownyng by the beere lay;  
Unnethe might the poeple that was there  
This newe Rachel bringe fro the beere.

With torment and with schamful deth echon  
This provost doth these Jewes for to sterve, 15040  
That of this moerder wist, and that anoon;  
He wolde no such cursednesse observe:  
Evel schal have, that evyl wol deserve.

---

15022—*y-corve*. I have substituted this reading (from the Lansd. MS), for *i-kut*, the reading of the Harl. MS.



Therfore with wilde hors he dede hem drawe,  
And after that he heng hem by the lawe.

Upon his beere ay lith the innocent  
Biforn the chief auter whiles the masse last :  
And after that, thabbot with his covent  
Han sped hem for to burie him ful fast :  
And whan thay halywater on him cast, 15050  
Yet spak this child, whan spreynde was the water,  
And song, *O alma redemptoris mater*.

This abbot, which that was an holy man,  
As monkes ben, or elles oughte be,  
This yonge child to conjure he bigan,  
And sayd: " O deere child, I halse the,  
In vertu of the holy Trinité,  
Tel me what is thy cause for to synge,  
Sith that thy throte is kit at my semynge."

" My throte is kit unto my nekke-boon," 15060  
Sayde this child, " and as by way of kynde  
I schulde han ben deed long tyme agoon :  
But Jhesu Crist, as ye in bookes fynde,  
Wol that his glorie laste and be in mynde;  
And for the worschip of his moder deere,  
Yet may I synge *O alma* lowde and cleere.

" This welle of mercy, Cristes moder swete,  
I loved alway, as after my connynge :  
And whan that I my lyf schulde leete,  
To me sche cam, and bad me for to synge 15070  
This antym verrailly in my deyinge,  
As ye have herd, and, whan that I had songe,  
Me thought sche layde a grayn under my tonge.

“ Wherfor I synge, and synge moot certeyne  
 In honour of that blisful mayden fre,  
 Til fro my tonge taken is the greyne.  
 And after that thus saide sche to me ;  
 ‘ My litil child, now wil I fecche the,  
 Whan that the grayn is fro thi tonge i-take :  
 Be nought agast, I wol the nought forsake.’ ” 15080

This holy monk, this abbot him mene I,  
 His tonge out caught, and took away the greyn ;  
 And he gaf up the gost ful softly.  
 And whan the abbot hath this wonder seyn,  
 His salte teres stricken down as reyn :  
 And gruf he fel adoun unto the grounde,  
 And stille he lay, as he had ben y-bounde.

The covent eek lay on the pavymment  
 Wepyng and heryng Cristes moder deere.  
 And after that thay rise, and forth thay went, 15090  
 And took away this martir fro his beere,  
 And in a tombe of marble stoones cleere  
 Enclosed thay this litil body sweete :  
 Ther he is now, God lene us for to meete !

O yonge Hughe of Lyncoln, slayn also  
 With cursed Jewes, (as it is notable,  
 For it nys but a litel while ago),  
 Pray eek for us, we synful folk unstable,  
 That of his mercy God so merciable

---

15095—*Hughe of Lyncoln*. The story of Hugh of Lincoln, which was made the subject of a variety of ballads, etc., is placed by the historians in the year 1255. The ballads in English and French, were collected together by M. Michel, and published at Paris in a small volume in 1834.

On us his grete mercy multiplie, 15100  
For reverence of his modir Marie.

## PROLOGE TO SIRE THOPAS.

WHAN sayd was this miracle, every man  
As sober was, that wonder was to se,  
Til that oure host to jape he bigan,  
And than at erst he loked upon me,  
And sayde thus: "What man art thou?" quod he.  
"Thou lokest as thou woldest fynde an hare,  
For ever upon the ground I se the stare.

"Approche ner, and loke merily.  
Now ware you, sires, and let this man have space.  
He in the wast is schape as well as I: 15111  
This were a popet in an arm to embrace  
For any womman, smal and fair of face.  
He semeth elvisch by his countenaunce,  
For unto no wight doth he daliaunce.

"Say now som what, sins other folk han said;  
Telle us a tale and that of mirthe anoon."  
"Host," quod I, "ne beth nought evel apayd,  
For other tale certes can I noon,  
But of a rym I lerned yore agoon." 15120  
"Ye, that is good," quod he, "now schul we heere  
Som deynté thing, me thinketh by thy cheere."

---

15104—he *bigan*. I have ventured to add the personal pronoun, which is wanting in the Harl. and Lansd. MSS., from Tyrwhitt.

## THE TALE OF SIR THOPAS.

LESTENETH, lordyngs, in good entent,

And I wol telle verrayment

Of myrthe and solas,

Al of a knyght was fair and gent

In batail and in tornament,

His name was sir Thopas.

I-bore he was in fer contré,

In Flaundres, al byyonde the se,

15130

At Poperyng in the place;

His fader was a man ful fre,

And lord he was of that contré:

As it was Goddes grace.

Sir Thopas wax a doughty swayn;

Whyt was his face as payndemayn,

His lippes reed as rose;

*The Tale of sir Thopas.* The introduction of this story by Chaucer is clearly intended as a satire on the dull metrical romances, then so popular, but of which Chaucer fully saw the absurdity. It is in fact a protest against the literary taste of his day. It is made up of phrases from the common metrical romances, if it be not a fragment of a romance dragged in by Chaucer. It has been stated that such a romance existed under the title of *The giant Olyphant and chylde Thopas*, but literary historians have not yet been able to find any traces of such a romance. This notion is, however, somewhat favoured by the circumstance that all the MSS. do not end with the same line, the Lansd. MS. concluding with l. 15322, and the Harl. wanting the last fragment of a line, as though different scribes omitted some, or added as from a poem which they had in memory.

15131—*Poperyng*. Poppering or Poppeling was a parish in the marches of Calais.

His rode is lik scarlet en grayn,  
And I yow telle in good certayn

He had a semly nose.

15140

His heer, his berd, was lik safroun,  
That to his girdil raught adoun ;

His schoon of cordewane ;  
Of Brigges were his hosen broun ;  
His robe was of sicladoun,

That coste many a jane.

He couthe hunt at wilde deer,  
And ride on haukyng for ryver

With gray goshawk on honde :  
Therto he was a good archeer,  
Of wrastelyng was noon his peer,

15150

Ther eny ram schal stonde.

Ful many mayde bright in bour  
Thay mourne for him, *par amour*,

Whan hem were bet to slepe ;  
But he was chast and no lecchour,  
And sweet as is the brembre flour  
That bereth the reede heepe.

15146—*jane*. A coin of Genoa (*Janua*), some of which, apparently of inferior value, are called in the English statutes *galley halfpence*. The *siglaton*, or *siclaton*, was a rich cloth or silk brought from the East, and is therefore appropriately mentioned as bought with Genoese coin.

15148—*on haukyng for ryver*. The river side is commonly described in the romances as the scene of hawking. Thus in the Squier of Low Degree,—

Homward thus schal ye ryde  
On haukyng by the ryvers syde,  
With goshaunke and with gentil fawcon,  
With buglehorn and merlyon.

See also before, l. 6466.

15152—*eny ram*. See before, line 550 and the tale of *Gamelyn*, l. 172.

And so it fel upon a day,  
For soth as I yow telle may, 15160  
    Sir Thopas wold out ryde ;  
He worth upon his steede gray,  
And in his hond a launcegay,  
    A long sword by his syde.  
He priketh thurgh a fair forest,  
Therin is many a wilde best,  
    Ye, bothe buk and hare ;  
And as he priked north and est,  
I tel it yow, hym had almest  
    Bityd a sory care. 15170  
Ther springen herbes greet and smale,  
The licorys and the cetewale,  
    And many a clow gilofre,  
And notemuge to put in ale,  
Whethir it be moist or stale,  
    Or for to lay in cofre.  
The briddes synge, it is no nay,  
The sperhawk and the popinjay,  
    That joye it was to heere,  
The throstilcok maad eek his lay, 15180  
The woode dowve upon the spray  
    Sche song ful lowde and cleere.  
Sir Thopas fel in love-longing,  
Whan that he herde the briddes synge,  
    And priked as he were wood ;

---

15182—*Sche song*. The Harl. MS. reads *so* for *sche*. Tyrwhitt gives *he*. The reading of the text is taken from the Lansd. MS.

His faire steede in his prikyng  
 So swette, that men might him wrynge,  
     His sydes were al blood.  
 Sir Thopas eek so wery was  
 For priking on the softe gras, 15100  
     So feers was his corrage,  
 That doun he layd him in that place  
 To make his steede som solace,  
     And gaf him good forage.  
 "O, seinte Mary, *benedicite*,  
 What eylyth this love at me  
     To bynde me so sore?  
 Me dremed al this night, pardé,  
 An elf queen schal my lemman be,  
     And slepe under my gore. 15200  
 An elf queen wol I have i-wis,  
 For in this world no womman is  
     Worthy to be my make  
         In toune;  
 Alle othir wommen I forsake,  
 And to an elf queen I me take  
     By dale and eek by doune."  
 Into his sadil he clomb anoon,  
 And priked over stile and stoon  
     An elf queen for to spy; 15210  
 Til he so longe hath ryden and goon,  
 That he fond in a privé woon  
     The contré of fairye,  
         So wylde;

---

15214—*so wylde*. This and the following lines, with the whole of this stanza, are given as they stand in the Harl. and Lansd. MSS., which I

For in that contré was ther noon,

That to him dorste ride or goon,

Neither wif ne childe.

Til that ther cam a greet geaunt,

His name was sir Olifaunt,

A perilous man of dede : 15220

He swar, " Child, by Termagaunt,

For if thou prike out of myn haunt,

Anoon I slee thy stede,

With mace.

Heer is the queen of fayerie,

With harp, and lute, and symphonie,

Dwellyng in this place."

The child sayd : " Al so mote I the,

To morwe wil I meete with the,

Whan I have myn armure. 15230

believe to be correct. I do not think, with Tyrwhitt, that there is anything necessarily wanting: he closes one stanza with line 15213, and gives as another stanza (the supplementary lines have been taken from a late and bad MS.),—

Wherin he soughte north and south,

And oft he spied with his mouth

In many a forest wilde,

For in that contree n'as ther non,

" That to him dorst ride or gon,

Neither wif ne childe.

15219—*sir Olifaunt*. *Olifaunt* means an elephant, and is not an inappropriate name for a pagan giant.

15221—*Termagaunt*. *Termagant* or *Tervagant* is the name of one of the favourite gods of the Saracens and pagans, in the popular literature of the Middle Ages. From the way in which they are made to bluster and rant, arose our modern use of the term *termagant*.

15222—*For*. The Lansd. MS. reads *But*, which is perhaps better.

15223—*thy stede*. This reading is adopted from the Lansd. MS., as being evidently the correct one. The Harl MS. reads as one line, *Anoon I slee the with mace*.



And yit I hope, par ma fay,  
 That thou schalt with this launcegay  
     Abyen it ful sore ;  
         Thy mawe  
 Schal I persyn, if that I may,  
 Er it be fully prime of day,  
     For heer schalt thou be slawe."  
 Sir Thopas drough on bak ful fast ;  
 This geaunt at him stoonnes cast  
     Out of a fell staf slynge ; 15240  
 But faire eschapeth child Thopas,  
 And al it was thurgh Goddis gras,  
     And thurgh his faire berynge.  
 Yet lesteneth, lordynges, to my tale,  
 Merier than the nightyngale  
     I wol yow rounne,  
 How sir Thopas with sides smale,  
 Prikyng over hul and dale,  
     Is come ageyn to toune.  
 His mery men comaunded he, 15250  
 To make him bothe game and gle,  
     For needes most he fight  
 With a geaunt with heedes thre,  
 For paramours and jolité  
     Of oon that schon ful bright.  
 "Do come," he sayde, "my mynstrales  
     And gestours for to telle tales

15248—*faire*. I have added this word from the Lansd. MS.

15251—*gestours for to telle tales*. "The proper business of a *gestour* was to recite tales, or *gestes* ; which was only one of the branches of the

Anoon in myn armynge,  
Of romaunces that ben reales,  
Of popes and of cardinales,

15260

minstrel's profession. Minstrels and gestours are mentioned together in the following lines, from William of Nassington's translation of a religious treatise by John of Waldby. MS. Reg. 17 C. viii, p. 2.

I warne you furst at the begynninge,  
That I will make no vain carpinge  
Of dedes of armys ne of amours,  
As dus mynstrelles and jestours,  
That makys carpinge in many a place  
Of *Octoviane* and *Isebrase*,  
And of many other jestes,  
And namely whan they come to festes;  
Ne of the life of *Bevys of Hampton*,  
That was a knight of gret renoun,  
Ne of *Sir Gye of Warwyke*,  
Al if it might sum men lyke—

I cite these lines to shew the species of tales related by the aucient gestours, and how much they differed from what we now call jestes."—*Tyrwhitt*.

15259—*romaunces. . reales*. "So in the rom. of *Ywain and Gawain*, MS. Cott. Galb. E. ix.

He fund a knight under a tre;  
Upon a cloth of gold he lay;  
Byfor him sat a ful fayr may:  
A lady sat with tham in fere;  
The maiden red, that thai might here,  
A *real romance* in that place,—

The original of this title, which is an uncommon one, I take to be this. When the French romances found their way into Italy (not long before the year 1300, *Crescimb.* T. i, p. 336), some Italian undertook to collect together all those relating to Charlemagne and his family, and to form them into a regular body of history. The six first books of this work come down to the death of Pepin. They begin thus: *Qui se comenza la hystoria el Real di Franza comenzando a Constantino imperatore secondo molte lezende che io ho attrovate e raccolte insieme.* Edit. *Mutinæ*, 1491, fol. It was reprinted in 1537 under this title, '*I reali di Franza*, nel quale si contiene la generazione di tutti i Re, Duchi, Principi e Baroni di Franza, e delli Paladini, colle Battaglie da loro fatte, etc.' *Quadrio*, T. vi, p. 530. Salvati had seen a MS. of this work written about 1350 (*Crescimb.* T. i, p. 330), and I do not believe that any mention of a *real*, or *royal*, *romance* is to be found, in French or English, prior to that date."—*Tyrwhitt*.

And eek of love-likynge."  
 Thay fet him first the swete wyn,  
 And made him eek in a maselyn  
     A real spicerye,  
 Of gyngebred that was so fyn,  
 And licorys, and eek comyn,  
     With sugre that is trye.  
 He dede next his white leere  
 Of cloth of lake whyt and cleere  
     A brech and eek a schert;  
 And next his schert an aketoun,  
 And over that an haberjoun,  
     For persying of his hert; 15270  
 And over that a fyn hauberk,  
 Was al i-wrought of Jewes werk,  
     Ful strong it was of plate;  
 And over that his cote-armour,  
 As whyt as is a lily flour,  
     In which he wold debate.  
 His scheld was al of gold so red,  
 And therinne was a bores heed,  
     A charbocle by his syde;

15261—*love likynge*. The Lansd. MS. reads, with Tyrwhitt, *love-longyng*.

15268. Tyrwhitt reads this and the next line,—

And mede eke in a maselin,  
 And real spicerie.

But I prefer much the reading of Harl. MS., as mead was not a very romantic liquor to be served to a knight adventurous.

15272—*Jewes werk*. I have not met with any passage in medieval writers explaining the nature of this *Jewes werk*, but I am not quite prepared to think with Tyrwhitt that a *Jew* means here a magician.

And ther he swor on ale and bred 15280

How that the geaunt schal be deed,

Bytyde what betyde.

His jambeux were of quirboily,

His swerdes schethe of yvory,

His helm of latoun bright.

His sadel was of rowel boon.

His bridel as the sonne schon,

Or as the moone light.

His spere was of fine cipres,

That bodeth werre, and no thing pees, 15290

The heed ful scharp i-grounde.

His steede was al dappul gray,

It goth an ambel in the way

Ful softely and rounde

In londe.

Lo, lordes, heer is a fyt;

If ye wil eny more of it,

To telle it wol I fonde.

[ FIT II. ]

Now hold your mouth for charité,

Bothe knight and lady fre, 15300

15286—*rowel boon*. This material, whatever it may be, is mentioned elsewhere as that of which rich saddles were made; as in the early ballad of *Thomas and the Elf queen*, speaking of the latter,—

Hir sadille was of *reuyll* bone,  
Semely was that sight to se,  
Stify sette with precious stone,  
Compaste aboute with *crapoté*.

15289—*fine*. I have added this word from the *Lansd. MS.*

15296—a *fyf*. This was a common English term for the different parts or divisions of a metrical romance.

And herkneth to my spelle :  
 Of batail and of chivalry,  
 Of ladys love and drewery,  
 Anoon I wol yow telle.  
 Men speken of romauns of pris,  
 Of Horn child, and of Ypotis,  
 Of Bevys, and sir Gy,  
 Of sir Libeaux, and Pleyndamour,  
 But sir Thopas bereth the flour  
 Of real chivalry. 15310  
 His goode steede he bistrood,  
 And forth upon his way he glood,  
 As spark out of the bronde ;  
 Upon his crest he bar a tour,  
 And therin stiked a lily flour,  
 God schilde his corps fro schonde.  
 And for he was a knyght auntrous,  
 He nolde slepen in noon hous,  
 But ligen in his hood.  
 His brighte helm was his wonger, 15320  
 And by him baytith his destrer  
 Of herbes fyne and goode.  
 Him self drank water of the welle,  
 As dede the knight sir Percivelle

---

15305—*romances of pris*. Nearly all the romances here enumerated are extant. The romance of Horn is preserved in Anglo-Norman and in English; the latter version is printed in Ritson's *Metrical Romances*. Ypotis is found in a Cottonian MS. (Calig. A. II) and in the Vernon MS. at Oxford. Bevis of Hampton and Guy of Warwick are too well known to need any explanation. Sir Libeaux, or Libeaux Desconus (the fair unknown), is printed also in Ritson's *Metrical Romances*.

15324—*sir Percivelle*. I have adopted Tyrwhitt's reading instead of that of the Harl. MS., of *Pertinelle*, because I remember no romance or

So worthy under wede,  
[Til on a day]—————

## PROLOGE TO MELIBEUS.

“No mor of this, for Goddes dignité!”  
Quod our hoste, “for thou makest me  
So wery of thy verrey lewednesse,  
That al so wisly God my soule blesse, 15330  
Myn eeres aken for thy drasty speche.  
Now such a rym the devel I byteche!  
This may wel be rym dogerel,” quoth he.  
“Why so?” quod I, “why wilt thou lette me  
More of my tale than another man,  
Syn that it is the beste rym that I can?”  
“By God!” quod he, “for plainly at o word,  
Thy drasty rymyng is not worth a tord:  
Thou dost nought elles but despendist tyme.  
Sir, at o word, thou schalt no lenger ryme. 15340

tale of a *knight of Pertinelle*, and the romance of *Percival* is well known. Tyrwhitt observes, “The romance of *Perceval le Galois*, or *de Galis*, was composed in octosyllable French verse by Chrestien de Troyes, one of the oldest and best French romancers, before the year 1191. *Faucher*, l. ii, c. x. It consisted of above sixty thousand verses (*Bibl. des Rom.* T. 11, p. 250), so that it would be some trouble to find the fact which is, probably, here alluded to. The romance, under the same title, in French prose, printed at Paris, 1530, fol. can only be an abridgement, I suppose, of the original poem.”

15325—*So worthy under wede*. “This phrase occurs repeatedly in the romance of *Emaré*.

fol. 70. b. Than sayde that *worthy unther wede*.

74. b. The childe was *worthy unther wede*,  
And sate upon a nobyl stede.

See also fol. 71, b. 73, a.—*Tyrwhitt*.

15326—*Til on a day*. These words are not in the Harl. MS.

Let se wher thou canst tellen ought in gest,  
Or telle in prose som what atte lest,  
In which ther be som merthe or doctrine."

"Gladly," quod I, "by Goddes swete pyne,  
I wol yow telle a litel thing in prose,  
That oughte like yow, as I suppose,  
Or elles certes ye be to daungerous.  
It is a moral tale vertuous,  
Al be it told som tyme in sondry wise  
Of sondry folk, as I schal yow devyse. 15350  
As thus, ye woot that every evaungelist,  
That telleth us the peyne of Jhesu Crist,  
Ne saith not alle thing as his felawes doth :  
But natheles here sentence is al soth,  
And alle accorden as in here sentence,  
Al be ther in her tellyng difference.  
For some of hem sayn more, and some lesse,  
Whan thay his pitous passioun expresse ;  
I mene of Mark and Mathew, Luk and Johan,  
But douteles her sentence is al oon. 15360  
Therfor, lordynges alle, I yow biseche,  
If yow think that I varye as in my speche,  
As thus, though that I telle som what more  
Of proverbes, than I have herd bifore  
Comprehended in this litel tretys here,'  
To enforcen with theeffect of my matiere,  
And though I not the same wordes say  
As ye have herd, yit to yow alle I pray,

Blameth me nought, for, in my sentence,  
 Schul ye no wher fynde difference 15370  
 Fro the sentence of this tretys lite,  
 After the which this litil tale I write.  
 And therfor herkeneth what I schal say,  
 And let me tellen al my tale, I pray."

## THE TALE OF MELIBEUS.

A YONG man called Melibeus, mighty and riche, bygat upon his wif, that called was Prudens, a doughter which that called was Sophie.<sup>1</sup> Upon a day byfel, that for his desport he is went into the feldes him to play. His wif and his doughter eek hath he laft within his hous, of which the dores were fast i-schitte. Thre<sup>2</sup> of his olde foos han it espyed, and setten laddres to the walles of his hous, and by the wyndowes ben entred, and betyn his wyf, and woundid his doughter with fyve mortal woundes, in fyve sondry places, that is to sayn, in here feet, in here hondes, in here eeres, in here nose, and in here mouth; and lafte her for deed, and went away.

Whan Melibeus retourned was into his hous, and seigh al this meschief, he, lik a man mad, rendyng his clothes, gan wepe and crie. Prudens his wyf, as ferforth

---

*The Tale of Melibeus.* This is a literal translation from a French story, of which there are two copies in the British Museum, MS. Reg. 19, C. vii and MS. Reg. 19, C. xi, both of the fifteenth century. The former, as apparently the best copy, is quoted in the following notes.

<sup>1</sup> *Sophie.* The name of the daughter is omitted in both the French MSS.

<sup>2</sup> *Thre.* The Lansd. MS. and Tyrwhitt read, *four*. The reading of both the French MSS., however, is *trois*, which is in all probability correct. *Three* was a favourite number in the medieval tales and apologues.



as sche dorste, bysought him of his wepyng to stynte. But not forthi he gan to crie ever lenger the more.

This noble wyf Prudence remembred hire upon the sentens of Ovide,<sup>3</sup> in his book that cleped is the Remedy of Love, wher as he seith: He is a fool that distourbeth the moder to wepe in the deth of hir childe, til sche have i-wept hir fille, as for a certeyn tyme: and than schal man doon his diligence as with amyable wordes hire to recomforte and praye hire of hire wepyng to stinte. For which resoun this noble wif Prudens suffred hir housbonde for to wepe and crie, as for a certeyn space; and whan sche seigh hir tyme, sche sayd him in this wise: "Allas! my lord," quod sche, "why make ye youre self for to be lik a fool? Forsothe it apper-teyneth not to a wys man, to make such sorwe. Youre doughter, with the grace of God, schal warischt be and eschape. And al were it so that sche right now were deed, ye ne oughte nought as for hir deth youre silf destroye. Senec saith, The wise man schal not take to gret discomfort for the deth of his children, but certes he schulde suffren it in pacience, as wel as he abyde the deth of his owne persone."

This Melibeus answerde anon and sayde: "What man," quod he, "schuld of his wepyng stynte, that hath so gret a cause for to wepe? Jhesu Crist, oure Lord, him self wepte for the deth of Lazarus his frend." Prudens answerde: "Certes, wel I wot, attemperel

---

<sup>3</sup> *the sentens of Ovide.* The allusion is to the *Remed. Am.* l. 125,—  
 Quis matrem, nisi matris inops, in funere nati  
 Flere vetet? etc.

wepying is no thing defended to him that sorwful is, amonges folk in sorwe, but it is rather graunted him to wepe. The apostel Poule unto the Romainys writeth, A man schal rejoyce with hem that maken joye, and wepe with such folk as wepen. But though attemperel wepyng be graunted, outrageous wepyng certe is defended. Mesure of wepyng schulde be conserved,<sup>4</sup> after the lore of Crist that techeth us Senec: Whan that thi frend is deed, quod he, let nought thin yen to moyste ben of teres, ne to moche drye: although the teeres come to thine eyghen<sup>5</sup>, let hem not falle. And whan thou hast for-gon thy frend, do diligence to gete another frende: and this is more wisdom than to wepe for thy frend, which that thou hast lorn, for therin is no boote. And therefore if ye governe yow by sapience, put away sorwe out of youre hert. Remembreth yow that Jhesus Sirac saith, A man that is joyous and glad in herte, it him conserveth florisching in his age: but sothly sorweful herte maketh his boones drye. He saith eek thus, that sorwe in herte sleth ful many a man. Salamon saith, that right as motthes in schepes flees annoyeth the clothes, and the smale wormes to the tre, right so annoyeth sorwe to the herte. Wherefore us oughte as wel in the deth of oure children, as in the

---

<sup>4</sup> *conserved*. The Lansd. MS., and Tyrwhitt read, *considered*; but the reading of the Harl. MS., representing the word *garder*, is correct. The original is, "E pour ce on doit paine mettre et garder la mesure, que Senesques dist."

<sup>5</sup> *come to thine eyghen*. I have kept the reading of Tyrwhitt, as most accordant with the original. "Car jà soit ce que la larme viengne à l'euëil, elle ne doit point yssir dehors." The Harl. MS. has, *come out of thine eyghen*; the Lansd. MS. *comen of*.

losse of oure goodes temporales, have pacience. Remembreth yow upon the pacient Job, whan he hadde lost his children and his temporal substance, and in his body endured and receyved ful many a grevous tribulacioun, yit sayde he thus: Oure Lord it sent unto me, oure Lord it hath raft fro me; right so as oure Lord wil, right so be it doon; i-blessed be the name of oure Lord!" To these forsayde thinges answerith Melibeus unto his wif Prudens: "Alle thine wordes ben soth," quod he, "and therto profytable, but sothly myn herte is so troubled with this sorwe, that I noot what to doone." "Let calle," quod Prudence, "thy trewe frendes alle, and thy linage, whiche that ben trewe and wise; telleth hem youre grevaunce, and herken what thay say in counseilynge, and yow governe after here sentence. Salamon saith, werke al thi thing by counseil, and the thar never rewe."

Than, by the counseil of his wyf Prudens, this Melibeus let calle a gret congregacioun of peple, as surgians, phisiciens, olde, and yonge,<sup>6</sup> and some of his olde enemyes recounsiled (as by her semblaunt) to his love and to his grace: and therwithal ther come some of his neighbours, that deden him reverence more for drede than for love, as happeth ofte. Ther comen also ful many subtil flaterers, and wise advoketes lerned in the lawe. And whan these folk togidere assemblid were, this Melibeus in sorwful wyse schewed hem his caas, and by the maner of his speche, it semed that in herte he

---

<sup>6</sup> *olde, yonge*. This is literal from the French original. Tyrwhitt reads, *olde folk and yonge*.

bar a cruel ire, redy to do vengeance upon his foos, and sodeynly desired that the werre schulde bygynne, but natheles yit axed he her counseil in this matier. A sirurgien, by licens and assent of suche as were wyse, up ros, and to Melibeus sayde, as ye may hieere.

"Sire," quod he, "as to us sirurgiens appertieneth, that we do to every wight the beste that we can, wher as we ben withholde, and to oure pacient that we do no damage: wherfore it happeth many tyme and ofte, that whan tweye han everich wounded other, oo same surgien heleth hem bothe, where unto oure art it is not perteyned to norische werre, ne parties to supporte. But certes, as to warisching of youre doughter, al be it so that sche perilously be woundid, we schullen do so tentyf besynes fro day to night, that with the grace of God sche schal be hool and sound, als soone as it is possible." Almost right in the same wise the phisiciens answerden, save that thay sayden a fewe wordes more: that ryght as maladies ben cured by her contraries, right so schal men warissch werre by vengeance.<sup>7</sup> His neygheboures ful of envy, his feyned freendes that semede recounsiled, and his flatereres, maden semblaunt of wepyng, and appaired and aggregated moche of this matiere, in preisyng gretly Melibé of might, of power, of riches, and of frendes, despisinge the power of his adversaries; and sayden outerly, that he anon schulde wreke him on his adversaries be bygynnyng of werre.

---

<sup>7</sup> *warissch werre by vengeance*. So the Harl. and Lansd. MSS. read correctly. Tyrwhitt omits the words *by vengeance*. The original is, "*aussi doit on guerir guerre par vengeance*."

Up roos thanne an advocate that was wys, by leve and by counseil of othere that were wise, and sayde :  
“ Lordynges, the needes for whiche we ben assemblit in this place, is ful hevy thing, and an heigh matier, bycause of the wrong and of the wikkednes that hath ben doon, and eek by resoun of the grete damages that in tyme comyng ben possible to falle for the same, and eek bycause of the grete richesse and power of the partes bothe, for the whiche resouns, it were a ful gret peril to erren in these materes. Wherefore, Melibeus, this is oure sentence; we counseile yow, aboven alle thinges, that right anon thou do diligence in kepyng of thy body in such a wyse that thou ne wante noon espye ne wacche thy body for to save. And after that, we counseile that in thin hous thou sette suffisaunt garnisoun, so that thay may as wel thy body as thin hous defende. But certes for to moeve werre, ne sodeynly for to doo vengeance, we may not deme in so litel tyme that it were profitable. Wherefore we axen leysir and a space to have deliberacioun<sup>8</sup> in this caas to demen; for the comune proverbe saith this: He that soone demeth, soone schal repente. And eek men sayn, that thilke juge is wys, that soone understondeth a matier, and juggeth by leysir. For al be it so, that alle taryinge is anoyful, algates it is no reproef in gevyng of juggement, ne of vengauce takyng, whan it is suffisaunt and resonable. And that schewed oure Lord Jhesu Crist by en-

---

<sup>8</sup> *Space to have deliberacioun.* I have added the three last words from the Lansd. MS., as they are authorized by the French original. They are omitted in the Harl. MS.

sample, for whan that the womman that was i-take in advoutrie, was brought in his presence to knowen what schulde be doon of hir persone, al be it that he wist him self what that he wolde answere, yit wolde he not answere sodeynly, but he wolde have deliberacioun, and in the ground hem wrot twyes. And by these causes we axe deliberacioun; and we schul thanne by the grace of God counseile the thing that schal be profytable." Upstarten thenne the yonge folkes anon at oones, and the moste parte of that companye han skorned these olde wise men, and bygonne to make noyse and sayden: "Right so as whil that iren is hoot men scholden smyte, right so schulde men wreke here wronges, whil that thay ben freische and newe:" and with lowde vois thay cryde, "Werre, werre."

Uproos tho oon of these olde wise, and with his hond made countenaunce that men schulde holde hem stille, and given him audience. "Lordyngs," quod he, "ther is ful many a man that crieth werre, werre, that wot ful litel what werre amounteth. Werre at his bygynnyng hath so greet an entre and so large, that every wight may entre whan him liketh, and lightly fynde werre: but certes what ende schal falle therof, it is not lightly to knowe. For sothly whan that werre is oones bygonne, ther is ful many a child unbore of his mooder that schal sterve yong, bycause of thilke werre, or elles lyve in sorwe and deye in wrecchidnes: and therefore er that eny werre be bygonne, men moste have gret conseil and gret deliberacioun." And whan this olde man wende to enforce his tale by resouns, wel neigh alle at

oones bygonne thay to rise, for to breke his tale, and beden him ful ofte his wordes to abrigge. For sothly he that precheth to hem that liste not to heere his wordes, his sermoun hem anoyeth. For Jhesus Sirac saith, that musik in wepyng<sup>9</sup> is a noyous thing. This is to say, as moche awayleth to speke to-fore folk to whiche his speche annoyeth, as it is to synge byfore hem whiche that wepith. And whan this wise man saugh him wanted audience, al schamefast he sette him down agayn. For Salamon saith, Ther as thou may have noon audience, enforce the not to speke. "I se wel," quod this wise man, "that the comune proverbe is soth, that good counseil wantith, whan it is most neede." Yit hadde this Melibeus in his counseil many folk, that prively in his eere counseled him certein thinges, and counseled him the contrarie in general audience.

Whan Melibeus hadde herd that the grettest party of his counseil were accorded that he schulde make werre, anon he consented to here counseilyng, and fully affermed here sentence. Thanne dame Prudence, whan that sche saugh that hir housbonde schop him to wreke him of his enemyes, and to gynne werre, sche in ful humble wise, whan sche saugh hire tyme, sayde him these wordes: "My lord," quod sche, "I yow biseche<sup>10</sup> as hertily as I dar and kan, ne haste yow nought to faste,

<sup>9</sup> *Musik in wepyng.* The Harl. MS. reads *wepyng in musik*; but the other reading, taken from the Lansd. MS., is authorized not only by the French original, but it is required by the context.

<sup>10</sup> *I yow biseche.* "Sire, dist elle, je vous prie que vous ne vous hastes, et que vous pour tous dons me donnez espace."

and for alle guerdouns as geve me audience. For Peres Alfons<sup>11</sup> saith, Who that doth to the outhur good or harm, haste the nought to quyten him, for in this wise thy freend wil abyde, and thin enemy schal the lenger lyve in drede. The proverbe saith, He hastith wel that wisly can abyde: and in wikked haste is no profyt." This Melibeus answerde unto his wyf Prudens: "I purpose not," quod he, "to werke by thy counseil, for many causes and resouns: for certes every wight wolde holde me thanne a fool; this is to sayn, if I for thy counseil wolde chaunge thinges that affermed ben by so many wise. Secoundly, I say that alle wommen be wikked, and noon good of hem alle. For of a thousand men, saith Salamon, I fond oon good man: but certes of alle wommen good womman fond I never noon. And also certes, if I governede me by thy counseil, it schulde seme that I hadde given to the over me the maistry: and God forbeede er it so were. For Jhesus Sirac saith, that if a wif have maistrie, sche is contrarious to hir housbond. And Salamon saith, Never in thy lif to thy wyf, ne to thy child, ne to thy freend, ne geve no power over thi self: for better it were that thy children axen of thy persone thinges that been needful to hem, than thou se thi self in the hondes of thy children. And also, if I wolde werke by thy counselynge, certes it

---

<sup>11</sup> *Peres Alfons.* Peter Alfonsus, or Alfonsi, was a converted Spanish Jew, who flourished in the twelfth century, and is well known for his *disciplina clericalis*,—a collection of stories and moralizations in Latin prose, which was translated afterwards into French verse under the title of the *Castoiement d'un pere à son fils*. It was a book much in vogue among the preachers from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century.



most som tyme be secré, til it were tyme that it moste be knowe : and this ne may not be."<sup>12</sup>

Whan dame Prudence, ful debonerly and with gret pacience, hadde herd al that hir housbonde liked for to seye, thanne axed sche of him licence for to speke, and sayde in this wise : " My lord," quod sche, " as to youre firste resoun, certes it may lightly be answered ; for I say it is no foly to chaunge counsel whan the thing is chaungid, or elles whan the thing semeth otherwise than it was biforn. And moreover I say, though that ye han sworn and i-hight to parforme youre emprise, and natheles ye wayve to parforme thilke same emprise by juste cause, men schulde not say therfore that ye were a lyere, ne for-sworn : for the book seith, that the wise man maketh no lesyng, whan he torneth his corrage to the better. And al be it so that youre emprise be establid and ordeyned by gret multitude of people, yet thar ye not accomplise thilke same ordinaunce but you like : for the trouthe of a thing, and the profyt, ben rather founde in fewe folk that ben wise and ful of resoun, than by gret multitude of folk, ther every man crieth and clatereth what that him liketh : sothely such multitude is not honest. And to the secounde resoun, wher as ye sayn, that alle wommen ben wikke : save youre grace, certis

---

<sup>12</sup> *Ne may not be.* After this paragraph, Chaucer has omitted to translate a passage of the French original, which, as it is requisite to understand some parts of the lady's reply, is here given. Molibous concludes his discourse with the observation—" Car il est escript, la genglerie des femmes ne puet riens celler fors ce qu'elle ne acet. Après le philozophe dit, en mauvais conseil les femmes vainquent les hommes. Et par ces raisons je ne dois point user de ton conseil."

ye despise alle wommen in this wise, and he that alle despysith, saith the book, alle displeseth.<sup>13</sup> And Senec saith, Who so wil have sapience, schal no man dispraise, but he schal gladly teche the science that he can, withoute presumpcioun or pryde : and suche thinges as he nought can, he schal not ben aschamed to lerne hem, and enquire of lasse folk than himself. And, sire, that ther hath be ful many a good womman, may lightly be proeved ; for certes, sire, our Lord Jhesu Crist nolde never han descended to be borne of a womman,<sup>14</sup> if alle wommen hadde ben wikke. And after that, for the grete bounté that is in wommen, oure Lord Jhesu Crist, whan he was risen fro deth to lyve, apperede rather to a womman than to his apostles. And though that Salamon say, he fond never good womman, it folwith nought therfore, that alle wommen ben wikke : for though that he fonde noone goode wommen, certes many another man hath founden many a womman ful goode and trewe. Or elles paraventure thentent of Salamon was this, as in sovereyn bounté he fond no womman ; this is to say, that ther is no wight that hath sovereyn bounté, save God aloone, as he him self recordeth in his Evaungelie. For ther nys no creature so good, that him ne wantith som what of the perfeccioun of God that is his makere. Your thridde resoun is this : ye seyn that if ye governed yow by counsel of

---

<sup>13</sup> *And he that alle despysith.* "Car il est escript, qui tout desprise, à tons desplaist." The words *alle displeseth* are omitted in the Harl. MS.

<sup>14</sup> *May lightly . . . of a womman.* The whole of this passage has been accidentally omitted by the scribe of the Harl MS. It is here supplied from the Lansd. MS.

me, it schulde seme that ye hadde geve me the maystry and the lordschipe over youre persone. Sire, save youre grace, it is not so; for if so were that no man schulde be counseiled but by hem that hadde maystrie and lordschipe of his persone, men wolde nought be counseiled so ofte: for sothly thilke man that axeth counsel of a purpos, yet hath he fre choise whether he wil werke by that purpos or non. And as to youre ferthe resoun, ther ye sayn that the janglerie of wommen can hyde thinges that thay wot not of; as who saith, that a womman can nought hyde that sche woot. Sire, these wordes ben understonde of wommen that ben jangelers and wikke; of whiche wommen men sayn that thre thinges dryven a man out of his oughne hous; that is to say, smoke, droppying of reyn, and wikked wyfes. Of suche wommen saith Salamon, that it were better to a man to dwelle in desert, that with a womman that is riotous. And, sire, by youre leve, that am not I; for ye han ful ofte assayed my grete silence and my grete pacience, and eek how wel that I can hyde and hele thinges, that ben secrely to hyde. And sothly as to youre fyfte resoun, wher as ye sayn, that in wikkede counsel wommen venquisscheth men, God wot thilke resoun stont here in no stede: for understandith now, ye axen counsel to do wickidnes; and if ye wil wirke wickidnes, and youre wyf restreyne thilke wicked purpos, and overcome you by resoun and by good counsel, certes youre wyf oweth rather be preised than y-blamed. Thus schulde ye understonde the philosopher that seith, In wicked counsel wommen venquyschen her hous-

bondes. And ther as ye blame alle wymmen and here resouns, I schal schewe by many resouns and ensamples that many a womman hath ben ful good, and yit been and here counseiles ful holsome and profitable. Eke some men han sayd, that the counseilyng of wommen is outhur to dere, or to litel of pris. But al be it so that ful many a womman is badde, and hir conseil vile and not worth, yet han men founde many a ful good womman, and ful discret and wys in counseilyng. Lo, Jacob, by conseil of his moder Rebecca, wan the blessing of his fader Ysaac, and the lordschipe of alle his bretheren. Judith, by hire good conseil, delyvered the citee of Bethulie, in which sche dwellid, out of the honde of Olophernus, that had bysegged it, and wolde it al destroye. Abigayl delivered Nabal hir housbond fro David the king, that wolde have i-slayn him, and appesed the ire of the kyng by hir witte, and by hir good counseilynge. Hester by good conseil enhaunsed gretly the poeple of God, in the regne of Assuerus the kyng. And the same bounté in good counseilyng of many a good womman may men rede and telle. And moreover, whan oure Lord had creat Adam oure forme fader, he sayde in this wise : It is not good to be a man aloone : make we to him an help semblable to him self. Here may ye se that if that a womman were not good, and hir conseil good and profytable, oure Lord God of heven wolde neither have wrought hem, ne called hem help of man, but rather confusioun of man. And ther sayde oones a clerk in tuo versus,<sup>15</sup> What is better that gold ?

---

<sup>15</sup> *In two versus.* I have not met with the two verses in question, but

Jasper. And what is better than jasper? Wisdom. And what is better than wisdom? Womman. And what is better than a good womman? No thing. And, sire, by many other resouns may ye se, that many wommen ben goode, and eek her counseil good<sup>16</sup> and profitable. And therefore, if ye wil truste to my counseil, I schal restore you youre doughter hool and sound: and eek I wil doon you so moche, that ye schul have honour in this cause."

Whan Melibé had herd these wordes of his wif Prudens, he seide thus: "I se wel that the word of Salamon is soth; he seith, that the wordes that ben spoken discretly by ordinaunce, been honycombes, for thay geven swetnes to the soule, and holsomnes<sup>17</sup> to the body. And, wyf, bycause of thy swete wordes, and eek for I have assayed and proved thi grete sapiens and thi grete trouthe, I wil governe me by thy counseil in alle thinges."

"Now, sire," quod dame Prudens, "and syn ye vouchen sauf to be governed by my counseilyng, I wil enforme you how ye schul governe youre self, in chesying

they seem to be a modification of a distich which is not uncommon in MSS., and which are printed thus in the *Reliq. Antiq.* i, p. 10:—

Auro quid melius? jaspis. Quid jaspide? sensus.

Sensu quid? ratio. Quid ratione? nihil.

In the manuscript from which this distich is there printed, it is coupled with another much less favourable to the fair sex than the version given by dame Prudence:—

Vento quid levius? fulgur. Quid fulgure? flamma.

Flamma quid? mulier. Quid muliere? nihil.

<sup>16</sup> *And eek her counseil good.* These words have been accidentally omitted in the Harl. MS.

<sup>17</sup> *Holsomnes.* The Harl. MS. reads erroneously *holines*. The French original has, *et santé au corps*.

of youre conseil. Ye schul first in alle youre werkes mekely biseche to the hihe God, that he wol be your counseilour: and schape you to that entent that he give you conseil and confort, as taughte Toby his sone: At alle tymes thou schalt blesse God, and pray him to dresse thy wayes; and loke that alle thi counseiles be in him for evermore. Seint Jame eek saith: If eny of yow have neede of sapiens, axe it of God. And afterward, thanne schul ye take conseil in youre self, and examine wel youre thoughtes, of suche thinges as you thinkith that is best for youre profyt. And thanne schul ye dryve fro youre herte thre thinges<sup>18</sup> that ben contrarie to good conseil; that is to say, ire, covейtise, and hastynes. First, he that axeth conseil of him self, certes he moste be withoute ire, for many cause. The first is this: he that hath gret ire and wraththo in him self, he weneth alwey he may do thing that he may not doo. And secoundly, he that is irous and wroth, he may not wel deme: and he that may not wel dome, may nought wel counseile. The thridde is this: that he that is irous and wroth, as saith Senec, may not spoke but blameful thinges, and with his vicious wordes he stiroth other folk to anger and to ire. And eek, sire, ye moste dryve covейtise out of youre horte. For thapostle saith, that covейtise is roote of alle harmes. And trustoth wel, that a covейtous man ne can not deme ne thinke, but

---

<sup>18</sup> *Dryve fro youre herte thre thinges.* The Harl. MS. reads imperfectly *heries tho that ben*, and the Lansd. MS. omits the word *thre*, which however is requisite to give the full sense of the original, -- "Et lors tu dois oster de toy trois choses qui sont contraires à conseil."

oonly to fulfille the ende of his coveitise; and certes that may never ben accomplished; for ever the more abundaunce that he hath of riches, the more he desireth. And, sire, ye moste also dryve out of your herte hastynes: for certes ye may nought deme for the beste a sodein thought that falleth in youre herte, but ye moste avyse you on it ful ofte. For as ye herde here biforn, the comune proverbe is this; that he that soone demeth, soone repentith. Sire, ye ben not alway in lik disposicioun, for certis som thing that som tyme semeth to yow that it is good for to doo, another tyme it semeth to you the contrarie. Whan ye han taken counseil in youre selven, and han demed by good deliberacioun such thing as yow semeth best, thanne rede I you that ye kepe it secré. Bywrewe nought youre counseil to no persone, but it so be that ye wene sicurly, that thurgh youre bywreyinge youre condicioun schal be to yow the more profytable. For Jhesus Syrac saith, Neither to thi foo ne to thi freend discovere not thy secré ne thy foly; for they wil give you audience and loking and supportacioun in thi presence, and scorn in thin absence. Another clerk saith, that skarsly schal thou fynde eny persone that may kepe counseil so creely. The book saith: Whil thou kepist thi counsail in thin herte, thou kepest it in thi prisoun: and whan thou bywreyst thi counseil to any wight, he holdeth the in his snare. And therefore yow is better hyde youre counseil in youre herte, than prayen him to whom ye have bywryed youre counseil, that he wol kepe it clos and stille. For Seneca seith: If so be that thou

ne maist not thin owne counseil hyde, how darst thou preyen any other wight thy counseil secreely to kepe ? But natheles, if thou wene securly that thy bywreying of thy counseil to a persone wol make thy condicioun stonde in the better plite, thanne schalt thou telle him thy counseil in this wise. First, thou schalt make no semblaunt wher the were lever werre or pees, or this or that ; ne schewe him not thi wille and thin entent : for truste wel that comunly these counseilours ben flaterers, namely the counselours of grete lordes, for thay enforcen hem alway rather to speke plesaunt wordes enclynnyng to the lordes lust, than wordes that been trewe and profytable. And therefore men say, that the riche man hath selden good counseil, but if he have it of him self. And after that thou schalt consider thy frendes and thine enemyes. And as touching thy frendes, thou schalt considere which of hem beth most faithful and most wise, and eldest and most approvyd in counsaylingo : and of hem schalt thou axe thy counsail, as the caas requireth.

“ I say, that first ye schul clope to youre counseil youre frendes that ben trewe. For Salamon saith, that right as the hert of a man delitith in savour that is soote, right so the counseil of trewe frendes geveth swetnes to the soule. He saith also, ther may no thing be likened to the trewe frend : for certes gold ne silver beth nought so moche worth as the goode wil of a trewe frend. And eek he sayde, that a trewe frend is a strong defons ; who that it fyndeth, certes he fyndeth a gret tresour. Thanne schul ye eek considere if that



youre trewe frendes ben discrete and wyse : for the book saith, Axe thi counseil alwey of hem that ben wyse. And by this same resoun schul ye clepe to youre counseil of youre frendes that ben of age, suche as have i-seye sightes and ben expert in many thinges, and ben approvyd in counseylinges. For the book saith,<sup>19</sup> that in olde men is the sapience, and in longe tyme the prudence. And Tullius saith, that grete thinges ben not ay accompliced by strengthe, ne by delyvernes of body, but by good counseil, by auctorité of persones, and by science : the whiche thre thinges ne been not feble by age, but certis thay enforseen and encresen day by day. And thanne schul ye kepe this for a general reule. First schul ye clepe to youre counseil a fewe of youre frendes that ben especial. For Salamon saith, many frendes have thou, but among a thousand chese the oon to be thy counseilour. For al be it so, that thou first ne telle thy counseil but to a fewe, thou mayst afterward telle it to mo folk, if it be neede. But loke alwey that thy counseilours have thilke thre condiciouns that I have sayd bifore ; that is to say, that they ben trewe, and olde, and of wys experiens. And werke nought alwey in every neede by oon counseilour alloone : for som tyme byhoveth it be counseiled by many. For Salamon saith, Salvacioun of thinges is wher as there beth many counseilours.

“Now sith that I have told yow of whiche folk ye schul be counseiled, now wil I telle yow which counseil

---

<sup>19</sup> *For the book saith.* The original refers for this maxim to the book of Job,—“Car il est escript en Job.”

ye ought eschiewe. First, ye schal eschiewe the counseil of fooles; for Salamon seith, Take no counseil of a fool, for he ne can not counseile but after his oughne lust and his affeccoun. The book seith, that the proprete of a fool in this: he troweth lightly harm of every wight, and lightly troweth alle bounte in him self. Thow schalt eschiewe eek the counseil of alle flaterers, suche as enforcen hem rather to prayse youre persone by flaterie, than for to telle yow the sothfastnesse of thinges. Wherefore Tullius saith, Amonges alle pestilences that ben in frendschipe, the grottest is flaterie. And therefore is it more neede that thou eschiewe and drede flaterers, more than eny other peple. The book saith, Thou schalt rather drede and flee fro the swete wordes of flaterers, then fro the egre wordes of thy frend that saith the thi sothes. Salamon saith, that the wordes of a flaterer is a snare to cacche in innocentz. He saith also, He that spekeoth to his frend wordes of swetnesse and of plesaunce, setteth a netto byfore his feet to cacchen him. And therefore saith Tullius, Decline not thin oeres to flaterers, ne tak no counseil<sup>20</sup> of the wordes of flaterers. And Catoun<sup>21</sup> saith, Avyso the wel, and eschiewe wordes of swetnes and of plesaunce. And eek thou schalt eschiewe the counselyng of thin olde enemys that ben recounsiled. The book saith, that no wight retorneth sally<sup>22</sup> into the grace

---

<sup>20</sup> *counsell*. I have retained this reading on the authority of MS. Lansd. and the original French. The Harl. MS. reads, *confort*.

<sup>21</sup> *Catoun*. Lib. iii, dist. 6,—

*Sermones blandos blasonque cavere memento.*

<sup>22</sup> *Sally*. In the French original, *seurement*. The Harl. MS. reads, *some*.

of his olde enemyes. And Ysope<sup>23</sup> saith, Ne truste not to hem, with which thou hast had som tyme werre or enmyté, ne telle not hem thy counsel. And Seneca telleth the cause why : it may not be, saith he, that wher as a greet fuyr hath longe tyme endured, that there ne leveth som vapour of hete. And therefore saith Salamon, In thin olde enemy truste thou nevere. For sicurly, though thin enemy be reconsiled, and make the cheer of humilité, and lowteth to the his heed, ne trist him never : for certes he makith thilke feyned humilité more for his profyt, than for eny love of thi persone ; bycause he demyth to have victorie over thi persone by such feyned countynaunce, the which victorie he might nought have by stryf and werre. And Petir Alphons saith : Make no felaschipe with thine olde enemyes, for if thou do hem bounté, they wil perverten it into wikkednes. And eek thou most eschiewe the counseilynge of hem that ben thy servauntz, and beren the gret reverence : for paraventure thai say it more for drede than for love. And therefore saith a philosopre in this wise : Ther is no wight parfytly trewe to him that he to sore dredeth. And Tullius saith, Ther is no might so gret of any emperour that longe may endure, but if he have more love of the peple than drede. Thow schalt also eschiewe the counsil of folk that ben dronkelewe, for thay ne can no counsel hyde. For Salamon saith, Ther is no priveté

---

<sup>23</sup> *Ysope*. Several collections of fables in the Middle Ages went under the name of *Ysope*, or *Æsop*, so that it would not be easy to point out the one from which this moral aphorism is taken.

ther as regneth dronkenesse.<sup>24</sup> Ye schul also have in suspect the counseil of such folk as counseileth you oon thing prively, and counseile yow the contrarie openly. For Cassiodorie saith, It is a maner sleighte to hindre,<sup>25</sup> whan he schewith to doon oon thing openly, and werkith prively the contrarie. Thou schalt also eschiewe the counseil of wikked folkes; for the book saith, The counselyng of wikked folk is alway ful of fraude. And David saith, Blisful is that man that hath not folwed the counselyng of wikked men or schrewes. Thow schalt also eschiewe the counselynge of yonge folk, for here counseil is nought rype.

"Now, sire, syn I have schowed yow of what folk ye schul take youre counsail, and of whiche folk ye schullen eschiewe the counseil, now schal I teche yow how ye schul examyne youre counseil after the doctrine of Tullius. In examynynge of youre counsailoures, ye schul considere many thinges. Althirfirst ye schul considere that in thilke thing that thou proposist, and up what thing thou wilt have counseil, that verray trouthe be sayd and considerid; this is to sayn, telle trewely thy tale. For he that saith fals, may not wel be counseled in that cas of which he lyeth. And after this, thou schalt considere the thinges that accorden to that purpos for to do by thy counseil, if resoun accorde

<sup>24</sup> *dronkenesse*. Nul secret n'est où regne yvresse. *Fr. Orig.*

<sup>25</sup> *to hinder*. Tyrwhitt, with the *Lands MS.*, reads *to hinder his enemy*, which conveys a meaning totally different from that of the original French, which has: "Cassiodore dit, une maniere de grover son amy est quant on lui conseille une chose en secret et monstrier en appert que on vult le contraire."

therto, and eek if thy might may accorde therto, and if the more part and the better part of thy counseilours accorde therto or noon. Thanne schalt thou cosidere what thing schal folwe of that consailynge; as hate, pees, werre, grace, profyt, or damage, and many other thinges: and in alle these thinges thou schalt chese the beste, and weyve alle other thinges. Thanne schalt thou considre of what roote engendred is the matier of thy counsel, and what fruyt it may conceve and engendre. Thow schalt also consider al these causes, from whens thai ben sprongen. And whan ye have examined youre counsel, as I have said, and which party is the better and more profitable, and han approved by many wise folk and olde, than schalt thou considre, if thou maist parforme it and make of it a good ende. For resoun wol nought that any man schuld bygynne a thing, but if he mighte parforme it and make therof a good ende: ne no wight schulde take upon him so hevy a charge, that he mighte not bere it. For the proverbe seith, He that moche embrasith destroyeth<sup>26</sup> litel. And Catoun<sup>27</sup> seith, Assay to do such thing as thou hast power to doon, lest that thy charge oppresse the so sore, that the bihove to wayve thing that thou hast bygonne. And if so be that thou be in doubte, wher thou maist performe a thing or noon, chese rather to suffre than bygynno. And Petre Alfons saith,. If thou hast might to doon a

---

<sup>26</sup> *destroyeth*. The Lansd. MS. and Tyrwhitt read, *distreineth*. The original has, "Car on dit ou proverbe, Qui trop embrasse, pou estraint."

<sup>27</sup> *Catoun*. This is from the *De Morib.* lib. iii, dist. 10,—  
Quod potes, id tentato; operis ne pondere pressus  
Succumbat labor, et frustra tentata relinquant.

thing, of which thou most repente, it is better nay than yee: this is to sayn, that the is better holde thy tonge stille than to speke. Than may ye understonde by strenger resouns, that if thou hast power to performe a werk, of which thou schalt repente, thanne is it better that thou suffre than bigynne. Wel seyn thay that defenden every wight to assaie thing of which he is in doute, whethir he may performe it or noon. And after whan ye han examyned youre counseil, as I have sayd biforn, and knowen wel ye may performe youre emprise, conferme it thanne sadly til it be at an ende.

"Now is it tyme and resoun that I schewe yow whanne, and wherfore, that ye may chaunge youre counseil withouten reproof. Sothly, a man may chaunge his purpos and his counseil, if the cause cesseth, or whan a newe cause bytydeth. For the lawe seith, upon thinges that newely bitydeth, bihoveth newe counseil. And Seneca seith, If thy counseil be comen to the oeres of thin enemy, chaunge thy counsail. Thow maist also chaunge thy counseil, if so be that thou fynde that by errour, or by other processo, harm or damage may bytyde. Also thou chaunge thy counseil,<sup>28</sup> if thy counseil be dishonest, or elles cometh of dishonesté; for the lawes sayn, that alle the hestes that ben dishoneste ben of no valieu: and oek, if it so be that it be impossible, or may not goodly be performed or kept. And take this for a general reule, that every counseil that is affermed or strengthened so strongly that it may not be

---

<sup>28</sup> also thou chaunge. The original gives this briefly, "*Après, quant le conseil est deshonneste ou vient de cause deshonneste, il ont de nulle valeur.*"

chaunged for no condicioun that may bitide, I say that thilke counseil is wikked."

This Melibeus, whan he had herd the doctrine of his wyf dame Prudens, answerde in this wise. "Dame," quod he, "yit as into this tyme ye han wel and covenably taught me, as in general, how I schal governe me in the chesyng and in the withholdyng of my counseilours: but now wold I fayn ye wolde condescende as in especial, and telleth me what semeth or how liketh yow by oure counseilours that we han chosen in oure present neede."

"My lord," quod sche, "I byseke yow in al humblesce, that ye wil not wilfully repplie against my resouns, ne distempre youre herte, though I say or speke thing that yow displesith; for God woot that, as in myn entent, I speke it for youre beste, for youre honour, and for your profyt eek, and sothly I hope that youre benignité wol take it into pacience. For trusteth me wel," quod sche, "that youre counseil as in this caas ne schulde not (as for to speke propurly) be called a counseilyng, but a mocion or a moevyng of foly, in which counseil ye han erred in many a sondry wise. First and forward, ye han erred in the gaderyng of youre counseilours: for ye schulde first han cleped a fewe folkes, if it hadde be neede. But certes ye han sodeinly cleped to your counseil a gret multitude of poeple, ful chargeous and ful anoyous for to hiero. Also ye han erred, for ther as ye schulde oonly have clepid to youre counseil youre trewe frendes, oldo and wise, ye have i-cleped. straunge folk, yongo folk, falso

flatereres, and enemyes reconsiled, and folk that doon yow reverence withoute love. And also ye han erred, for ye han brought with yow to youre counseil ire, coveitise, and hastynes, the whiche thre things ben contrarious to every counsail honest and profitable: the whiche thre thinges ye have nought annentissched or destroyed, neyther in youre self ne in youre counseiloures, as ye oughte. Also ye have erred, for ye have schewed to youre counseilours youre talent and youre affeccoun to make werre, and for to doon vengeance anon, and thay han espyed by youre wordes to what thinge ye ben enclined: and therfore have thay counseiled yow rather to youre talent than to youre profyt. Ye have erred also, for it semeth that yow sufficeth to have been counseiled by these counseilours only, and with litel avys, wher as in so gret and so heigh a neede, it hadde be necessarious mo counseilours and more deliberacioun to performe youre emprise. Ye have erred also,<sup>29</sup> for ye have maked no divisioun bytwix youre counseilours; this is to seyn, bitwix youre frendes and youre feyned counseilours: ne ye ne have nought i-knowe the wille of youre frendes, olde and wise, but ye have cast alle here wordes in an bochepoeche, and enclyned youre herte to the more part and to the gretter nombre, and there be ye condescendid; and syn ye wot wel men schal alway fynde a gretter nombre of foolos

---

<sup>29</sup> *Ic have erred also.* Tyrwhitt has here added a short paragraph, apparently made up from more than one MS. The original is: "Après tu as erré quant tu as fait la division de ton conseil; tu n'as mie suivy la volonté de tes loyaux amis saiges et anciens, mais as seulement regardé le grant nombre; et tu sees que toujours li fol sont en plus grant nombre que les saiges."



than of wyse men, and therefore the counsailes that ben at congregaciouns and multitudes of folk, ther as men taken more reward to the nombre than to the sapience of persones, ye se wel that in suche counseilynges fooles have maystrie."

Melibeus answerde agayn and sayde: "I graunte wel that I have erred; but ther as thou hast told me to-form, that he is nought to blame that chaungeth his conseilours in certeyn caas, and for certeyn juste causes, I am al redy to chaunge my conseilours right as thou wilt devyse. The proverbesaith, that for to do synne is mannysch, but certes for to persevere longe in synne is werk of the devyl."

To this sentence anon answerde dame Prudens, and saide: "Examineth," quod sche, "yours counsail, and let us se which of hem hath spoke most resonably, and taught you best counsail. And for as moche as the examinacioun is necessarie, let us byginne at the surgiens and at the phisiciens, that first speken in this matiere. I say you that the surgiens and the phisiciens han sayd yow in youre conseil discretly, as hem ought: and in here speche sayden ful wisely, that to the office of hem appendith to doon to every wight honour and profyt, and no wight to annoy, and after here craft to do gret diligence unto the cure of hem whiche that thay have in here governaunce. And, sire, right as thay answerde wisely and discretly, right so rede I that thay be heighly and sovereignly guerdoned for here noble speche, and eek for thay schullen do the more ententyf besynes in the curyng of youre doughter dore. For al be it so that thai be youre frendes, therefore schul ye nought suffre

that thay schul serve yow for nought, but ye oughte the rathere to guerdoune hem and schewe hem youre largesse. And as touchynge the proposiciouns whiche the phisiciens han schewed you in this caas, this is to sayn, that in maladyes oon contrarie is warissshed by another contrarie, I wolde fayn knowe thilke text and how thay understonde it, and what is youre entente." "Certes," quod Melibeus, "I understonde it in this wise; that right as thay han do me a contrarie, right so schold I do hem another; for right as thai han venged hem on me and doon me wrong, right so schal I venge me upon hem, and doon hem wrong; and thanne have I cured oon contrarie by another." "Lo, lo," quod dame Prudence, "how lightly is every man enclyned to his oughne pleasure and to his oughne desir! Certes," quod sche, "the wordes of the phisiciens ne schulde nought have ben understonde sone in that wise; for certes wikkednesse is no contrarie to wickednesse, ne vengeaunce to vengeaunce, no wrong to wrong, but thai ben semblable: and thorfore a vengeaunce is nought warissshed by another vengeaunce, no oon wrong by another wrong, but everych of hem oncreseth and engreggith other. But certes the wordes of the phisicians schul ben understonde in this wise: for good and wikkednesse ben tuo contraries, and pees and werre, vengeaunce and sufferaunce, discord and accord, and many other thinges: but, certes, wikkednes schal be warrissshed by goodnesse, discord by accord, werre by pees, and so forth of other thinges. And herto accordith saint Paul the apostil in many places: he saith, Ne yeldith nought harm for

harm, ne wikked speche for wikked speche; but do wel to him that doth the harm, and blesse him that saith the harme. And in many other places he amonesteth pees and accord. But now wil I speke to yow of the counseil, which was give to yow by the men of lawe, and the wise folk, and olde folk,<sup>30</sup> that sayde alle by oon accord as ye have herd byfore, that over alle thinges ye schal do youre diligence to kepe youre persone, and to warmstore youre house: and seyden also, that in this yow aughte for to wirche ful avysily and with gret deliberacioun. And, sire, as to the firste poynt, that touched to the kepinge of youre persone, ye schul understonde, that he that hath werre, schal evermore devoutly and mekely prayen biforn alle thinges, that Jhesu Crist wil of his mercy have him in his protec cioun, and ben his soverayn helpyng at his neede: for certes in this world ther nys no wight that may be counseiled or kept sufficauntly, withoute the kepinge of our lord Jhesu Crist. To this sentence accordeth the prophete David, that seith: If God ne kepe not the citee, in ydel wakith he that kepith it. Now, sire, thanne schul ye committe the keping of youre persone to youre trewe frendes, that ben approved and y-knowe, and of hem schul ye axen help, youre persone to kepe. For Catoun<sup>31</sup> saith: If thou have neede of help, axe it of thy

---

<sup>30</sup> *and olde folk.* These three wordes are omitted in the Harl. MS., but I have restored them from the MS. Lansd. and the French original.

<sup>31</sup> *Catoun.* The passage alluded to is found in the *Distich. de Morib.* lib. iv, dist. 14.

Auxilium a notis petito, si forte laboras;

Nec quisquam melior medicus quam fidus amicus.

freendes, for ther is noon so good a phisicien at neede as is a trewe frend. And after this than schal ye kepe you fro alle straunge folkcs, and fro lyeres, and have alway in suspect here compaignye. For Pieres Alfons saith: Ne take no compaignye by the way of a straunge man, but so be that thou knowe him of a longer tyme: and if so be he falle into thy compaignye paraventure withouten thin assent, enquire thanne, as subtilly as thou maist, of his conversacioun, and of his lyf bifore, and feyne thy way, and say that thou wilt go thider as thou wolt nought goon; and if he bere a spere, holde tho on the right syde, and if he bere a sword, holde tho on the lyft syde. And so after this thanne schul ye kepe you wisely from al such peple as I have sayd bifore, and hem and here counseil eschiowe. And after this, thanne schul ye kepe yow in such manere, that for ony presumeioun of youre strengthe, that ye despise not the might of youre adversario so lite, that ye lete the kepinge of youre persone for your presumeioun; for every wis man dredeth his enemy. And Salamon saith: Welesful is he that of alle hath drede; for certes he that thurgh hardynes of his herte, and thurgh the hardynesse of himself, hath to gret presumeioun, him schal evyl bitide. Thanne schal ye evermore counterwayte embusshementz and alle espiaillo. For Sence saith, that the wise man that dredith harmes, eschiewith harmes, no he no fallith into noone perils, that perils eschieweth. And al be it so that the some that thou art in sikor place, yit schaltow alway do thy diligence in kepyng of thy

persone; this is to say, be not neegligent to kepe thy persone, nought oonly for thy gretteste enemyes, but fro thy lest enemyes. Senec saith: A man that is wel avysed, he dredith his lest enemy. Ovide seith,<sup>32</sup> that the litel wesil wol sle the grete bole and the wilde hert. And the book saith, a litel thorn wol prikke a king ful sore, and an hound wol holde the wilde boore. But na-theles, I say not that ye schul be so moche a coward, that ye doute where is no neede or drede. The book saith,<sup>33</sup> that som folk have gret lust to disceyve, but yit thay dreden hem to be deceyved. Yet schal ye drede to ben empoisoned. And kepe the fro the companye of scornors: for the book saith, with scornors make no compaignye, but flee hem and here wordes as venym.

“Now as to the secounde poynt, where as youre wise counseilours warnede yow to warmstore youre hous with gret diligence, I wolde fayn wite how that ye understoode thilke wordes, and what is your sentence.” Melibeus answerde and saide: “Certes, I understonde it in this wise, that I schal warmstore myn hous with toures, suche as han castiles and other maner edifices, and armure, and artilries; by suche thinges I may my persone and myn hous so kepen and edifien and defen-

<sup>32</sup> *Ovide seith*. The original quotes more fully, “Et Ovide, ou livre du Remede d'Amours.” The maxim is not found, as far as I can discover, in Ovid, de Remed. Amor.

<sup>33</sup> *The book saith*. “Car il est escript, aucunes gens ont enseingnie lour decevoir, car ils ont trop doubté que on ne les deceust.” Tyrwhitt has what he calls “patched up” this passage in his edition, by the insertion of some words of his own. I have followed the Harl. MS. exactly. Chaucer amplifies and alters his original in this part, which makes it difficult to correct it by the French.

den, that myn enemyes schul be in drede myn hous to approche."

To this sentence answerde dame Prudence: "Warm-storynge," quod sche, "of heihe toures and grete edifices, is with grete costages and grete travaile; and whan that thay ben accomplished, yit both thay nought worth a straw, but if they be defended by trewe frendes, that beth olde and wise. And understondeth that the grettest strength or garnisoun that the riche man may have, as wel to kepe his persone as his goodes, is that he be biloved with his subgites and with his neighbours. For thus saith Tullius, that thor is a maner garnisoun, that no man may venquisshe ne discomfite, and that is a lord to be biloved with his citezains, and of his peple.

"Now thanne as to youre thriddo poynt, where as youre olde and wyse counseillours sayde, ye oughte nought sodeinly ne hastily procede in this needo, but that ye oughte purveyen yow and apparaille yow in this caas with gret diligence and gret deliberacioun; trowely, I trowe, that thay sayden soth and right wisely. For Tullius saith: 'In every node, er thou bigynne it, apparaille the with gret diligence.' Thanne say I, that in vengeance takinge, in werre, in bataile, and in warm-storage of thin hous, er thou bygynne, I rode that thou apparaille the therto, and do it with gret deliberacioun. For Tullius saith, that long apparaylyng byfore the bataille, maketh schort victorie. And Cassidorus saith, the garnisoun is stronger whan it is long tyme avysed,

"But now let us speke of the counseil that was

accorded by youre neigheours, suche as doon you reverence withoute love, youre olde enemyes recounsiled, your flatereres, that counseile yow certeyn thinges pryvely, and openly counseile yow the contrarie, the yonge also, that counsaile yow to make werre and vengo yow anon. And certes, sire, as I have sayd byforn, ye have gretly erred to have cleped such maner folk to youre conseil, whiche be now reprevd by the resouns byfore sayd. But natheles let us now descende to the purpos special. Ye schul first procede after the doctrine of Tullius. Certes, the trouthe of this matier or this counseil nedeth nought diligently enquire, for it is wel wist, whiche it ben that doon to yow this trespas and vilonye, and how many trespasoures, and in what maner thay han to yow doon al this wrong and al this vilonye. And after that schul ye examyne the secounde condicioun, which Tullius addith therto in this matier. Tullius put a thing, which that he clepeth consentynge:<sup>34</sup> this is to sayn, who ben thay, and whiche ben thay, and how many, that consentid to this matiere, and to thy counsaile in thy wilfulnesse, to do hasty vengauces. And let us considere also who ben tho, and how many ben tho, that consenteden<sup>35</sup> to youre adversaries. And certes, as to the first poynt, it is wel knowen whiche folk ben thay that consentid to youre

<sup>34</sup> *Consentyngge*. The Harl. MS. reads *covetyngge*, by an error of the scribe, as appears by the sequel.

<sup>35</sup> *Consenteden*. I have restored this reading from MS. Lansd. and the French original, instead of the reading of the Harl. MS., *that ben counseilours*.

first wilfulnes. For trewly, alle tho that counsailled yow to make sodeyn werre, beth nought youre frendes. Let us considre whiche ben tho that ye holde so gretly youre frendes, as to youre persone ; for al be it so that ye be mighty and riche, certes ye been alloone : for certes ye have no childe but a doughter, ne ye have no bretheren, ne cosins garmayns, ne noon other neigh kynrede, wherfore that youre enemyes for drede schulden stynte for to plede with you, and struye youre persone. Ye knowe also, that youre riches mooten in divers parties be departed ; and whan every wight hath his part, thay wol take but litel reward to venge thy deth. But thyne enemyes ben thre, and have many children, bretheren, cosynes, and othere neigh kynredo ; and though it so were ye hadde slayn of hem tuo or thre, yet dwellen there y-nowe to wreke here doth and sle thi persone. And though so were that youre kynredo were more sekir and stedefast than the kynredo of youre adversaries, yit nathelos youre kynredo nis but a fer<sup>35</sup> kynredo, and litel sib to yow, and the kyn of youre enemyes ben neigh sibbe to hem. And certes, as in that, here condicioun is bet than youre. Thanne let us considre also if the counsaileynge of hem that counsailled yow to take sodein vengeance, whothir it accorde to resoun. And certes, ye knowe wel, nay ; for as by right and resoun, ther may no man taken vengeance upon no wight, but the juggle that hath

<sup>35</sup> *A fer.* This is Tyrwhitt's reading, which seems to agree better with the context than the reading of the Harl. MS., *litel*.



jurediccioun of it, whan it is y-graunted him to take thilke vengeance hastily, or attemperely, as the lawe requireth. And yit moreover of thilke word that Tullius clepith consentynge, thou schalt considre, if thy might and thy power may consente and suffice to thy wilfulnes and to thy counseilours. And certes, thou maist wel say, that nay; for sicurly, as for to speke properly, we may doo no thing but oonly oon thing which we may do rightfully: and certes rightfully may ye take no vengeance, as of youre owne auctorité. Than may ye se that youre power consentith not, ne accordith not, with youre wilfulnesse.

“Let us now examyne the thridde poynt, that Tullius clepeth consequente. Thou schalt understonde, that the vengeance that thou purposiddest for to take, is consequent, and therof folweth another vengeance, peril, and werre, and other damages withoute nombre, of whiche we be not war, as at this tyme. And as touching the fourthe poynt, that Tullius clepeth engendrynge, thou schalt considre that this wrong which that is doon to the, is engendred of the hate of thin enemyes, and of the vengeance takinge up that wolde engendre another vengeance, and moche sorwe and wastying of riches, as I sayde. Now, sire, as to the poynt that Tullius clepith causes, whiche that is the laste poynt, thou schalt understonde that the wrong that thou hast receyved hath certeyn causes, whiche that clerkes calle *oriens*, and *efficiens*, and *causa longinqua*, and *causa propinqua*, this is to say, the fer cause, and the noigh cause. For the fer cause is almighty God, that is

cause of alle thinges: the nere cause, is the thre enemyes; the cause accidental was hate; the causes materiales been the fyve woundes of thy doughter; the cause formal is the maner of here werkyng, that brought in laddres and clombe in at thin wyndowes; the cause final was for to sle thy doughter; it letted nought in as moche as was in hem. But for to speke of the fer cause, as to what ende thay schal come, or what schal finally betyde of hem in this cause, can I not deme, but by coniectyng and by supposyng; for we schul suppose, that thay schul come to a wikked ende, bycause that the book of Decrees saith: Seelden, or with gret payne, ben causes i-brought to a good ende, whan thay ben evyl bygonne.

“Now, sire, if men wolde axe me, why that God suffrede men to do yow this wrong and vilonye, certes I can not wel answeere, as for no sothfastnes. For the apostil saith, that the sciences and the juggements of oure Lord God almyghty ben ful deepe, ther may no man comprehende no serchen hem sufficiauntly. Natheles, by certeyn presumpciouns and coniectinges, I holde and bilieve, that God, which that is ful of justice and of rightwisnesse, hath suffred this to bityde, by juste cause resonable. Thy name, Melibé, is to say, a man that drynketh hony. Thou hast y-dronke so moche hony of sweete temperel richesses and delices and honours of this world, that thou art dronke, and hast forgeto Jhesu Crist thy creatour: thou hast not doon him such honour and reverence as the oughte to doone, no thou hast nought wel taken keep to the wordes of

Ovide,<sup>37</sup> that saith, Under the hony of thy goodes of thy body is hid the venym that sleeth thi soule. And Salamon saith, If thou have founde hony, ete of it that sufficeth; for if thou ete of it out of mesure, thou schalt spewe, and be nedy and povere. And peraventure Crist hath the in despit, and hath torned away fro the his face and his eeres of misericorde; and also he hath suffred that thou hast ben punysshed in the maner that thou hast i-trespased. Thou hast doon synne against oure Lord Crist, for certes thi thre enemyes of mankynde, that is to say, thy flessche, the feend, and the world, thou hast y-suffred hem to entre into thin herte wilfully, by the wyndow of thy body, and hast nought defended thiself sufficiently agayns here assautes,<sup>38</sup> and here temptaciouns, so that thay have woundid thi soule in fyve places, this is to sayn, the dedly synnes that ben entred into thin herte by thy fyve wittes: and in the same maner oure Lord Crist hath wolde and suffred, that thy thre enemyes ben entred into thin hous by the wyndowes, and have i-woundid thi doughter in the forsayde maner."

"Certes," quod Melibeus, "I so wel that ye enforece yow moche by wordes to overcome me, in such manere, that I schal not venge me on myn enemyes, schewyng me the perils and the yveles that mighten falle of this vengeance. But who so wolde considre in alle ven-

---

<sup>37</sup> *Ovide*. I presume the allusion is to *Ovid. Amor. lib. i, cl. viii, 104.*  
*Impia sub dulci melle venena latent.*

<sup>38</sup> *Assautes*. The Harl. MS. reads *ascentis*, and the Lauds. MS. *defautes*. The reading here adopted from Tyrwhitt is authorized by the French original, which has *assaues*.

geaunces the periles and the yveles that mighten folwe of vengeaunces takynge, a man wolde never take vengeaunce, and that were harm: for by vengeaunce takynge be wikked men destroyed and dissevered fro the goode men. And thay that have wille to wikkednes, res-treignen here wikked purpos, whan thay seen the punysshynge and the chastisynge of trespasours.

"And yit<sup>39</sup> say I more, that right so as a sengle persone synneth in taking of vengeaunce, right so the juggle synneth if he doo no vengeaunce of him that it hath deserved. For Senec saith thus: That maister, he saith, is good that reproveth schrowes.<sup>40</sup> And as Cassoder saith: A man drodeth to doon outrage, whan he woot and knoweth that it displesoth to the jugges and the soveraynes. And another saith: The juggle that drodeth to demen right, maketh schrewes. And seint Poul thappestoil saith in his epistil, whan he writoth to the Romainys: The jugges bere not the spore withoute cause, but they boron it to punyssh the schrowes and mysdoers, and for to defende with the goode men. If ye wol take vengeaunce on youre enomyes, ye schul retourne or have recours to the jugges,

---

<sup>39</sup> *And yit.* The commencement of this paragraph, which is very necessary for the sense, is not found in Chaucor's translation in any of the MSS. In the French original it stands thus:—"Et à ce respont dame Prudence, 'Ciertes' dist-elle, 'je t'octroye que de vengeance vient molt de maux et de biens, mais vengeance n'appartient pas à un chacun, fors seulement aux juges, et à ceux qui ont la juridiction sur les malfaiteurs. Et dit plus que,' &c.

<sup>40</sup> *For Senec...schrewes.* I give this reading, adopted by Tyrwhitt, instead of that of the Harl. MS., *He that maister is, he saith good to reprove schrewes*, which neither offers any apparant sense, nor represents the French original, "*Car Senesque dit, Celui nuit aux bons qui espargne les mauvais.*"

that have jurediccoun upon hem, and he schal pun-  
 issche hem, as the lawe axeth and requireth." "A!"  
 quod Melibeus, "this vengeance liketh me no thing.  
 I bythenke me now, and take heed, how fortune hath  
 norissched me fro my childhode, and hath holpe me to  
 passen many a strayt passage; now wol I aske her  
 that sche schal, with Goddes help, helpe me my schame  
 for to venge."

"Certes," quod Prudence, "if ye wil wirche by my  
 counseil, ye schul not assaye fortune by no maner way,  
 ne schul not lene ne bowe unto hire, after the word of  
 Senec; for thinges that beth folly, and that beth in  
 hope of fortune, schul never come to good ende. And  
 as the same Senek saith: The more cleer and the  
 more schynynge that fortune is, the more brutil, and  
 the sonner breketh sche. So trusteth nought in hire,  
 for sche is nought stedefast ne stable: for whan thou  
 wenest or trowest to be most seur of hir help, sche wol  
 fayle and deceyve the. And wher as ye say, that for-  
 tune hath norissched yow fro youre childhode, I say that  
 in so mochel ye schul the lasse truste in hire and in  
 hire witte. For Senek saith: What man that is no-  
 rissched by fortune, sche maketh him to gret a fool.  
 Now siththe ye desire and axe vengeance, and the  
 vengeance that is doon after the lawe and byforn the  
 jugge ne liketh yow nought, and the vengeance that is  
 doon<sup>41</sup> in hope of fortune, is perilous and uncerteyn,

---

<sup>41</sup> *After the lawe...that is doon.* These words are omitted in the Harl. MS. by an evident error of the scribe, who skipped from the first *doon* to the second. They have their representative in the original French, and are here given from the Lauds. MS.

thanne haveth ye noon other remedye, but for to have recours unto the soveraigne jugge, that vengith alle vilonies and wronges; and he schal venge yow, after that himself witnesseth, where as he saith: Leveth the vengeaunce to me, and I schal yelde it." Melibeus answerd: "If I ne venge me nought of the vilonye that men have doon unto me, I schal sonnere warne hem that han doon to me that vilonye, and alle othere, to doo me another vilonye. For it is writen: If thou tak no vengeaunce of an old vilonye, thou somnest thin adversarie do the a newe vilonye. And also, for my suffraunce, men wolde do me so moche vilonye, that I mighte neither bere it ne susteyne it; and so schulde I be put over lowe. For men say, in moche sufferynge schal many thinges falle unto the, whiche thou schalt nought nowe suffre." "Certos," quod Prudence, "I graunte yow wel, that over mochil suffraunce is nought good, but yit folwith it nought therof, that every persone to whom men doon vilonye, take of it vengeaunce. For it appertieneth and longeth al oonly to the jugges, for thay schul venge the vilonyes and injuries: and therfore the auctoritoes that ye have sayd above been oonly understonden in the jugges: for whan thay suffre to mochil the wronges and the vilonyes that ben doon withoute punysshing, thay somme not a man oonly to doo newe wronges, but thay comaunde it. Also the wise man saith: The jugge that correcteth not the synnere, comaundith him and byddith him doon another synne. And the jugges and soveraignes mighten in here lond so mochil suffren of the schrowes

and mysdoeres, that thay schulde by such suffraunce, by proces of tyme, wexen of such power and might, that thay schulde put out the jugges and the soveraignes from here places, and atte laste do hem lese here lordschipes. But lete us now putte, that ye han leve to venge yow : I say ye ben nought of might ne power as now to venge you : for if ye wolde make comparisoun as to the might of youre adversaries, ye schulde fynde in many thinges, that I have i-schewed yow er this, that here condicioun is bettre than youre, and therefore say I, that it is good as now, that ye suffro and be pacient.

“ Forthmore ye knowe that after the comune sawe, it is a woodnesse, a man to stryve with a strengre or a more mighty man than him selven is ; and for to stryve with a man of evene strengthe, that is to say, with as strong a man as he is, it is peril ; and for to stryve with a weykere, it is folye ; and therfore schulde a man fle stryvynge as moche as he mighte. For Salamon seith : It is a gret worschipe, a man to kepe him fro noyse and stryf. And if it so bifalle or happe that a man of gretter might and strengthe than thou art, do the grevaunce, stude and busye the rather to stille the samo grevaunce, than for to venge the. For Senec saith, he putteth him in a gret peril that stryvoth with a grotter man than he him selven is. And Catoun<sup>42</sup> saith : If a man of heiher estat or degré, or more mighty then thou,

---

<sup>42</sup> *Catoun.* Lib. iv. dist. 40 :—

“ Cede locum læsus, fortunæ cedo potentis ;

Lædere qui potuit, prodesse aliquando valebit.”

do the anoye or grevaunce, suffre him ; for he that hath oones don the a grievance, may another tyme relieve the and helpe the.

“ Yit sette I a caas, ye have both might and licence for to venge yow, I say ther ben ful many thinges that schulde restreigne yow of vengeance takynge, and make yow to encline to suffre, and to have pacience of the wronges that han ben doon to yow. First and forward, ye wol considre the defautes that been in youre owne persone, for whiche defautes God hath suffred yow to have this tribulacioun, as I have sayd yow herbyfore. For the poete saith, We oughten patiently to suffre the tribulacioun that cometh to us, whan that we thenken and consideren, that we han deserved to have hem. And seint Gregorie saith, that whan a man considereth wel the nombre of his defautes, and of his synnes, the peynes and the tribulaciouns that he suffereth semen the lasso unto him. And in as moche as him thenkith his synnes the more hevy and grevous, in so moche his payne is the lighter and the more esier unto him. Also ye oughten to oncline and bowe youre herte, to take the pacience of oure Lord Jhesu Christ, as saith seint P<sup>et</sup>or in his Epistles. Jhesu Crist, he seith, hath suffred for us, and given ensample unto every man to folwe and sowe him, for he dede never synne, ne never cam vileyns worde out of his mouth. Whan men cursed him, he cursed hem not ; and whan men beeto him, he manased hem not. Also the grete pacience which that seintes that been in Paradys han had in tribulaciouns that thay have had and suffred withoute



desert or gult, oughthe moche stire yow to pacience. Forthermore, ye schuld enforce yow to have pacience, consideringe that the tribulaciouns of this world but litel while enduren, and soon passed ben and goon, and the joye that a man secheth to have by pacience in tribulaciouns is perdurable; after that the apostil seith in his Epistil: the joye of God, he saith, is perdurable, that is to say, evermore lastynge. Also troweth and believeth stedefastly, that he is not wel norished and taught, that can nought have pacience, or wil nought receyve pacience. For Salamon saith, that the doctrine and the witte of a man is i-knowe by pacience. And in another place he seith: He that hath pacience governeth him by gret prudence. And the same Salamon seith, that the wrathful and the angry man maketh noyses, and the pacient man attempereth and stilleth him. He seith also: It is more worth to be pacient than for to be right strong. And he that may have his lordschipe of his oughne herte, is more worth and more to preise than he that by his force and by his strengthe taketh grete citees. And therfore saith seint Jamo in his Epistil, that pacience is a gret vertu of perfeccioun."

"Certes," quod Melibeus, "I graunto yow, damo Prudence, that pacience is a grete vertue of perfeccioun;<sup>43</sup> but every man may not have the perfeccioun that ye sekyn, ne I am not of the nombre of right parfyte men: for myn herte may never be in poes,

---

<sup>43</sup> *Certes . . . perfeccioun.* These words have been omitted by the scribe of the Harl. MS., whose eye ran on from the word *perfeccioun* which closes the preceding paragraph to the words *but every man, etc.* They are here restored from the Lansd. MS.

unto the tyme it be venged. And al be it so, that it was a gret peril to myne enemyes to don me a vilonye in takinge vengeaunce upon me, yit tooken thay noon heede of the peril, but fulfilden here wikked desir and her corrage: and therfore me thenkith men oughten nought repreve me, though I putte me in a litel peril for to venge me, and though I do a gret excesse, that is to say, that I venge oon outrage by another."

"A!" quod dame Prudence, "ye say youre wille and as yow likith; but in noon caas in the world a man ne schulde nought doon outrage ne excesse for to venge him. For Cassidore saith, as evel doth he that avengith him by outrage, as he that doth the outrage. And therfore ye schul venge yow after the ordre of right, that is to sayn, by the lawe, and nought by excesse, ne by outrage. And also if ye wil venge yow of the outrage of youre adversaries, in other maner than right comaundeth, ye synnen. And therfore saith Senec, that a man schal never venge schrowednes by schrowednes. And if ye say that right axeth a man to defende violence by vyolenco, and fightyng by fightyng: certes, ye say soth, whan the defence is doon anon withouten interalle, or withouten taryinge or dilay, for to defenden him, and nought for to venge him. And it bihoveth a man putte such attemperance in his defence, that men have no cause ne matiere to repreven him, that defendith him, of excesse and outrage. Pardé! ye knowe wel, that ye make no defence as now for to defende yow, but for to venge yow: and so semoth it, that ye have no wille to do youre wille attemperelly: and therfore me

thenkith that pacience is good. For Salamon saith, that he that is not pacient, schal have gret harm." "Certes," quod Melibeus, "I graunte you wel, that whan a man is impacient and wroth of that that toucheth him nought, and that apperteineth nought to him, though it harme him it is no wonder.<sup>44</sup> For the lawe saith, that he is coupable that entremettith him or mellith him with such thing, as aperteyneth not unto him. Dan Salamon saith, He that entremetteth him of the noyse or stryf of another man, is lik him that takith the straunge hound<sup>45</sup> by the eeres: for right as he that takith a straunge hound by the eeres is other while biten with the hound, right in the same wise, it is resoun that he have harm, that by his impacience mel- leth him of the noise of another man, where it aper- teyneth not to him. But ye schul knowe wel, that this dede, that is to sayn, myn disease and my grief, toucheth me right neigh. And therefore, though I be wroth, it is no mervayle: and (savyng your grace) I can not see that it mighte gretly harme me, though I toke ven- geaunce, for I am richer and more mighty than myne enemyes been: and wel knowe ye, that by monoy and by havynge of grete possessiouns, ben alle tho thinges of this world governede. And Salamon saith, that alle thinges obeyen to moneye."

<sup>44</sup> *of that...no wonder.* This passage is omitted in the Harl. MS., but it is restored from the Lansd. MS., supported by the French original.

<sup>45</sup> *the straunge hound.* The word *straunge* is omitted in the Harl. and Lansd. MSS., the latter of which is somewhat confused here. It is how- ever evidently necessary; the French has, "*le chien qui ne congnoist.*" In the next line the Harl. MS. reads, *the strong hound.*

Whan Prudence had hord hire housbond avaunte him of his richesse and of his moneye,<sup>46</sup> dispraisynge the power of his adversaries, tho sche spak and saydo in this wyse: "Certes, deere sire, I graunte yow that yo ben riche and mighty, and that richesse is good to hem that wel have geten it, and that wel conne use it. For right as the body of a man may not be withoute the soule, no more may a man lyve withoute temperel goodes, and by richesse may a man gete him greet frendschipe. And therefore saith Pamphillos:<sup>47</sup> If a noethurdes doughter, he saith, be riche, sche may chooso of a thousand men, which sche wol take to hir housbonde: for of a thousand men oon wil not forsake hir no refuse hire. And this Pamphillos scith also: If thou be right happy, that is to sayn, if thou be right richo, thanne schalt thou fynde a gret nombre of felawes and frendes; and if thy fortune chaunge, that thou waxe pore, fare wel frendschipe, for thou schalt ben aloone withouten ony companye, but if it be the compaignye of pore folk. And yit saith this Pamphillus moreover, that they that ben thral and bonde of linage, schullen ben maad worthy and noble by richesse. And right so as by richesse ther come many goodes, right so by povert

<sup>46</sup> *Whan Prudence...his moneye.* This is also omitted in the Harl. MS., by an oversight of the scribe, who passed on from the word *moneye* at the end of the preceding paragraph.

<sup>47</sup> *Pamphillos.* This poem has already been mentioned in the note on line 11422. Tyrwhitt has given from a Bodleian MS. the lines here alluded to,—

Dummodo sit dives ejusdam nata bubulei,  
Eligit e millo quencilibet illa virum, etc.

comen ther many harmes and yvels : for grete povert constreigneth a man to doon many yvels.<sup>48</sup> And therfore clepeth Cassidore povert the moder of<sup>49</sup> ruynes, that is to sayn, the moder of overthrowng or fallynge down. And therfore saith Pieres Alpons : Oon of the grettest adversités of this world, is whan a free man by kyn or burthe is constreigned by povert to eten the almes of his enemyes. And the same seith Innocent in oon of his bookes, that sorweful and unhappy is the condicioun of a povere begger, for if he axe nought his mete, he deyeth for hungir, and if he axe, he deyeth for schame : and algates the necessité constreigneth hym to axe. And therfore saith Salamon, that bettre is it to dey, than to have such povert. And as the same Salamon saith : Bettir is to deye on bitter deth, than for to lyve in such a wyse.

“ By these resouns that I have sayd unto yow, and by many another resoun that I know and couthe say, I graunte yow that riches ben goode to hem that gete hem wel, and to hem that hem wel usen : and therfore wol I schewe yow how ye schulde bere yow in getyng of riches, and in what maner ye schulde use hem. First, ye schulde gete hem withoute gret desir, by good leysir, sokyngly, and nought over hastily ; for a man that is to desiryng for to gete riches, abandoneth him first to

<sup>48</sup> *and yvels...many yvels.* The passage, omitted in the Harl. MS., is restored from the Lansd. MS.

<sup>49</sup> *the moder of.* These three words are omitted in the Harl. MS., by an oversight of the scribe. The original is, *mere des crimes*, mother of crimes.

theftes and to alle othere yveles. And therfore saith Salamon: He that hastith him to bisyly to waxe riche, schal ben noon innocent. He saith also, that the riches that hastily cometh to a man, soone and lightly goth and passeth fro a man, but that riches that cometh alway litel and litel, waxeth alway and multiplieth. And, sire, ye schal gete riches by youre witte and by youre travayle, unto youre profyt, and that withoute wrong or harm doyng to eny other persone. For the lawe saith, that no man maketh him self riche, that doth harm to another wight; this is to say, that nature defendeth and forbedith by right, that no man make him self riche unto the harm of another persone. Tullius saith, that no sorwe ne drede of deth, ne no thing that may falle to a man, is so moche ageinst nature, as a man to encrease his oughne profyt to the harm of another man. And though the grete men and the riche men gete riches more lightly than thou, yit schalt thou not be ydil ne slowe to thy profyt, for thou schalt in alle wise flee ydilnes. For Salamon saith, that ydelnesse techith a man to do many yveles. And the same Salamon saith, that he that travailleth and besieth him to tilye the lond, schal ete breed: but he that is ydil, and casteth him to no busynesse ne occupacioun, schal falle into povert, and deye for hunger. And he that is ydel and slough, can never fynde him tyme, for to do his profyt. For ther is a versifiour saith, the ydel man excuseth him in wynter, bycause of the grete colde, and in somer by enchesoun of the grete hoto. For these causes, saith Catoun, waketh,<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> *waketh.* "I can find nothing nearer to this in Cato, than the

and enclineth yow nought over moche for to slepe, for over moche reste norischeth and causeth many vices. And therfore saith seint Jerom: Doth some goode deedes, that the devel, which that is oure enemy, ne fynde yow unoccupied; for the devel ne takith not lightly unto his werkes suche as he fyndeth occupied in goode werkes. Thanne thus in getyng of riches ye moot flee ydelnesse. And afterward ye schul use the riches, the whiche ye han geten by youre witte and by youre travaile, in such a maner, that men holde yow not skarce ne to sparynge, ne to fool large, that is to say, over large a spender. For right as men blamen an averous man, bycause of his skarseté and chyncherie, in the same manere is he to blame, that spendeth over largely. And therfore saith Catoun: Use, he saith, thi riches that thou hast y-geten in such a manere, that men have no matier ne cause to calle the neither wrecche ne chynche; for it is gret schame to a man to have a pover herte and a riche purse. He saith also: The goodes that thou hast i-geten, use hem by mesure, that is to say, spende hem mesurably; for thay that folily wasten and spenden the goodes that thay have, whan thay have no more propre of here oughne, thay schape hem to take the goodes of another man. I say thanne ye schul flee avarice, usynge youre richesse in such manere, that men seyn nought that youre richesse<sup>50</sup> be buried, but that ye have hem in

---

maxim, Lib. iii, dist. 7, 'Segnitium fugito.' For the quotations from the same author a few lines below, see Lib. iv, dist. 17, and Lib. iii, dist. 23." —*Tyrwhitt*.

<sup>50</sup> *men seyn nought that youre richesse*. These words, omitted in the Harl. MS., are restored from the Lansd. MS.

youre might and in youre weldyng. For the wise man reproveth the averous man, and saith thus in tuo versus: Wherto and why burieth a man his goodes by his gret avarice, and knowith wel, that needes most he deye, for deth is the ende of every man, as in this present lif? and for what cause or enchesoun joyneth he him, or knetteth him so fast unto his goodes, that alle his wittes mowe nought dissever him, or departe him fro his goodes, and knowith wel, or oughte knowe wel, that whan he is deed, he schal no thing bere with him out of this world? And therfore seith seint Austyn, that the averous man is likned unto helle, that the more that it swolwith, the more it desireth to swolwe and devoure. And as wel as ye wolde eschewo to be cleped an averous man or chinche, as wel schulde ye kepe yow and governe yow, in such a wise, that men clepe yow nought fool large. Therfore saith Tullius: The goodes, he saith, of thin hous schulde nought ben hidde no kepte so clos, but that thay might ben opened by *pit  * and by *bonairet  *;<sup>51</sup> that is to sayn, to give hem part that han gret neede; ne thy goodes schul not be so open, to be every mannes goodes.

“Aftirward, in getyng of youre riches, and in usyng hem, ye schul alway have thre thinges in youre horte, that is to say, oure lord God, conscience, and good name. First, ye schul have God in youre horte, and for no riches ye schul in no manere doo no thing

---

<sup>51</sup> *bonairet  *. This seems to be altogether an English form of the word, and occurs elsewhere in English writers. The French had only *debonnaire*. Tyrwhitt here reads *debonairetee*, and the French original has, “que pit   et debonnairet   ne les puissent ouvrir.”



which might displese God that is your creatour and youre maker. For after the word of Salamon, it is better to have litil good with love of God, than to have mochil good and tresor, and lese the love of his lord God. And the prophete saith: Better is to ben a good man, and have litel good and tresore, than to ben holden a schrewe, and have gret riches. And yit say I forthermore, that ye schuln alway doon youre businesse to gete yow riches, so that ye gete hem with good conscience. And the apostil seith, ther nys thing in this world of which we schuln have so gret joye, as whan oure conscience bereth us good witnes. And the wise man saith: The substaunce of a man is ful good, whan synne is not in his conscience. Afterward, in getyng of youre riches, and in usynge of hem, you most have gret busynesse and gret diligence, that youre good name be alway kept and conserved. For Salamon saith: Better it is, and more aveylith a man, for to have a good name, than for to have gret riches. And therefore he saith in another place: Do gret diligence, saith Salamon, in kepyng of thy frend, and of thy good name, for it schal lenger abyde with the, than eny tresor, be it never so precious. And certes, he schulde nought be cleped a gentil man, that after God and good conscience, alle thinges left, ne doth his diligence and busynesse, to kepe his good name. And Cassidore saith, that it is signe of a good man and a gentil, or of a gentil herte, whan a man loveth or desireth to have a good name. And therefore saith seint Augustyn, that ther ben tuo thinges that ben necessarie and needful; and that is good conscience and good loos;

that is to sayn, good conscience in thin oughne persone in-ward, and good loos of thin neghebor out-ward. And he that trusteth him so moche in his good conscience, that he despiseth and settith at nought his good name or loos, and rekketh nought though he kepe not his good name, nys but a cruel churl.

“Sire, now have I schewed yow how ye schulde doon in getyng of good and riches, and how ye schulde use hem: I see wel that for the trust that ye have in youre riches, ye wolde meve werre and bataile. I counseile yow that ye bygynne no werre in trust of youre riches, for thay suffisen not werres to mayntene. And therfore saith a philosophre: That man that desireth and wol algate have werre, schal never have sufficeaunce: for the richere that he is, the gretter dispenses most he make, if he wol have worschipe or victorie. And Salamon saith: The gretter riches that a man hath, the moo despendours he hath. And, deere sire, al be it so that for youre riches ye mowe have moche folk, yit byhoveth it not ne it is not good to bygynne werre, ther as ye may in other maner have pees unto youre worschipe and profyt; for the victorie of batailles that ben in this world, lith not in gret nombre or multitude of poeple, ne in vertu of man, but it lith in the wille and in the hond of oure lord God almighty. And Judas Machabeus, which was Goddes knight, whan he schulde fighte ageinst his adversaries, that hadde a gretter nombre and a gretter multitude of folk and strengere than was the poeple of this Machabé, yit he reconforted his litel poeple, and sayde ryght in this wise: As lightly, quod he, may oure lord God almighty give victory to fewe folk, as to many

folk;<sup>52</sup> for the victorie of batailles cometh nought by the grete nombre of poeple, but it cometh fro oure lord God of heven. And, dere sire, for as moche as ther is no man certeyn, if it be worthi that God give him victorie or nought, after that that Salamon saith, therfore every man schulde gretly drede werres to bygynne. And by-cause that in batailles falle many mervayles and periles, and happeth other while, that as soone is the grete man slayn as the litel man; and, as it is writen in the secounde book of Kynges, the deedes of batayles be aventurous, and no thing certeyn, for as lightly is oon hurt with a spere as another; and for ther is gret peril in werre, therfore schulde a man flee and eschewe werre in as moche as a man may goodly. For Salamon saith: He that loveth peril, schal falle in peril."

After that dame Prudens hadde spoke in this maner, Melibé answerde and sayde: "I se wel, dame, that by youre faire wordes and by youre resouns, that ye have schewed me, that the werre liketh yow no thing: but I have not yit herd youre counseil, how I schall doo in this neede." "Certes," quod sche, "I counseile yow that ye accorde with youre advcrsaries, and that ye have pees with hem. For seint Jame saith in his Epistles, that by concord and pees, the smale ryches wexen grete, and by debaat and discord the gret richesses fallen down. And ye knowe wel, that oon of the moste grettest and sovereign thinges, that is in this world, is unité and pees. And therfore saith oure lord

---

<sup>52</sup> *as to many folk.* These words are omitted in the Harl. MS., evidently by a mere oversight of the scribe.

Jhesu Crist to his aposteles in this wise: Wel happy and blessed be thay that loven and purchacen pees, for thay ben called children of God."<sup>53</sup> "A!" quod Melibé, "now se I wel, that ye loven not myn honour, ne my worschipe. Ye knowe wel that myne adversaries han bygonne this debate and brige by here outrage, and ye see wel that thay require ne praye me not of pees, ne thay askyn nought to be recounseild; wol ye thanne that I goo and meke me unto hem, and crie hem mercy? For sothe that were not my worschipe: for right as men seyn, that over gret pryde engendreth dispisyng, so fareth it by to gret humbleté or mekenes." Thanne bygan dame Prudence to make semblant of wraththe, and sayde: "Certes, sire, save youre grace, I love youre honour and youre profyt, as I doo myn owne, and ever have doon; ye ne mowe noon other seyn: and yit if I hadde sayd, ye scholde have purchaced pees and the reconciliacioun, I ne hadde not moche mystake in me, ne seyd amys. For the wise man saith: The discencioun bigynneth by another man, and the reconsilynge bygynneth by thy self. And the prophete saith: Flee schame and schrewednesse and doo goodnesse; seeke pees and folwe it, as moche as in the is. Yet seith he not, that ye schul rather pursewe to youre adversaries for pees, than thei schul to yow: for I knowe wel that ye be so hard-herted, that ye wil doo

---

<sup>53</sup> *God.* The Harl. MS. reads *Crist*; but the reading adopted in the text is not only supported by the Lansd. MS. and the original French, but by the words of St. Matthew v. 9: "*Beati pacifici, quoniam filii Dei vocabuntur.*"

no thing for me; and Salamon saith: He that is over hard-herted, atte laste he schal myshappe and mystyde."

Whan Melibé had seyn dame Prudence make semblaunce of wraththe, he sayde in this wise: "Dame, I pray yow that ye be not displesed of thinges that I say, for ye knoweth wel that I am angry and wroth, and that is no wonder; and thay that ben wroth, wot not wel what thay doon, ne what thay say. Therfore the prophete saith, that troublit eyen have no cleer sight. But sayeth and counsaileth me forth as yow liketh, for I am redy to doo right as ye wol desire. And if ye reprove me of my folye, I am the more holde to love yow and to prayse yow. For Salamon saith, that he that repreveth him that doth folie, he schal fynde grotter grace than he that deceyveth him by swete wordes." Thanne sayde dame Prudence: "I make no semblant of wraththe ne of anger, but for youre grote profyt. For Salamon saith: He is more worth that reproveth or chydeth a fool for his folie, schewynge him semblant of wraththe, than he that supporteth him and prayseth him in his mysdoying, and laugheth at his folie. And this same Salamon saith afterward, that by the sorweful visage of a man, that is to sayn, by sory and hevvy countenaunce of a man, the fool corretteth himself and amendeth." Thanne sayde Melibous: "I schal not conne answeere to so many faire resouns as ye putten to me and schewen; sayeth schortly youre wille and youre counseil, and I am al redy to fulfille and perfourme it."

Thanne dame Prudence discovered al hire counsail and hire will unto him and sayde: "I counseile yow,"

quod sche, "above alle thinges, that ye make pees bitwen God and yow, and beth reconsiled unto him and to his grace, for as I have sayd yow herbiforn, God hath suffred yow have this tribulacioun and disease<sup>54</sup> for youre synnes; and if ye do as I say yow, God wol sende youre adversaries unto yow, and make hem falle at youre feet, al redy to doo youre wille and youre commaundment. For Salamon saith: Whan the condicioun of man is plesant and likyng to God, he chaungeth the hertes of the mannes adversaries, and constreignoth hem to biseke him of pees and of grace. And I pray yow let me spoke with youre adversaries in privé place, for thay schul not knowe it by youre wille or youre assent;<sup>55</sup> and thanne, whan I knowe here wille and here entent, I may counseile yow the more seurlly."

"Dame," quod Melibous, "doth youre wille and youre likyng, for I putte me holly in youre disposicioun and ordinaunce." Thanne dame Prudence, whan sche seih the good wille of hir housbond, sche delibered and took avis by hir self, thenkyng how sche mighte bringe this neede unto good conclusioun and to a good ende. And whan sche saugh hire tyme, sche sente for these adversaries to come unto hire into a privé place, and schewed wysly unto hem the grete goodes that comen of pees, and the grete harmes and

<sup>54</sup> *Tribulacioun and disease.* The Harl. MS. omits the two first words, which are given from the Lansd. MS. The French original has *ceste tribulacion* only.

<sup>55</sup> *For thay schul not knowe...your assent.* Sans faire semblant que ce viengne de vostre consentement.

perils that ben in werre; and sayde to hem, in goodly manere, how that hem aughte to have gret repentaunce of the injurie and wrong that thay hadde doon to Melibé hire lord, and unto hire and hire doughter. And whan thay herden the goodly wordes of dame Prudence, they were tho surprised and ravyssched, and hadden so gret joye of hire, that wonder was to telle. "A, lady!" quod thay, "ye have schewed unto us the blessing of swetnes, after the sawe of David the prophete; for the recounsilyng, which we be nought worthy to have in no manere, but we oughten require it with gret contricioun and humilité, ye of youre grete goodnes have presented unto us. Now we se wel, that the science of Salamon is ful trewe: he saith, that swete wordes multiplien and encrescen frendes, and maken schrewes to ben debonaire and meke. Certes," quod thay, "we puttenoure deede, and aloure matier and cause, al holly in youre good wille, and ben redy to obeye to the speche and to the comaundement of my lord Melibé. And therfore, deere and benigne lady, we pray yow and byseke yow, as meekely as we conne and may, that it like to yowre grete goodnes to fulfille in deede youre goodliche wordes. For we considere and knowleche wel that we have offended and greved my lord Melibé out of resoun and out of mesure, so ferforth that we ben nought of power to make his amendes; and therfore we oblie us and bynde us andoure frendes, for to doo al his wille and his comaundmentz. But peraventure he hath such hevynes and such wraththe to us-ward, bycause ofoure offence, that he wol enjoyne us such poyne

as we mow not bere ne susteyne; and therfore, noble lady, we biseke to youre wommanly pité to take such avysement in this neede, that we, ne oure frendes, ben not disherited and destroyed thurgh oure folye." "Certes," quod dame Prudence, "it is an hard thing, and right a perilous, that a man put him al outrely in the arbitracioun and juggement and the might and power of his enemyes. For Salamon saith: Leeveth and giveth credence to that that I schal say: I say, quod he, geve poeple and governours of holy chirche,<sup>56</sup> to thy sone, to thi wyf, to thy frend, ne to thy brother, ne geve thou never might ne maystry of thy body, whil thou lyvest. Now, sith he defendith that a man schulde not give to his brother, ne to his frend, the might of his body, by a strengre resoun he defendeth and forbedith a man to give his body to his enemye. But natheles, I counseile yow that ye mystruste nought my lord; for I wot wel and knowe verrailly, that he is debonaire and meke, large, curteys, and no thing desirous ne coveytous of good ne richesse: for there is no thing in this world that he desireth, save oonly worschipe and honour. Forthremore I knowe, and am right seure, that he wol no thing doo in this neede withoute counsail of me; and I schal so worche in this cause, that by the grace of oure lord God ye schul be recounsiled unto us."

---

<sup>56</sup> *I say, quod he, geve poeple and governours of holy chirche.* These words are not found in the Lansd. MS., and are omitted by Tyrwhitt. They are confused; but the word *head* or *ear* appears to be omitted after *geve*. The French has: "Car Salmon dit, oiez moy, dist'il, tous peuples, toutes gens et gouverneurs de gloire, à ton filz," &c.



Thanne sayde thay, with oon voys : "Worschipful lady, we putte us and oure goodes al fully in youre wille and disposicioun, and ben redy to come, what day that it like yow and unto youre noblesse to limite us or assigne us, for to make oure obligacioun and bond, as strong as it liketh to youre goodnes, that we mowe fulfille the wille of yow and of my lord Melibé." Whan dame Prudence had herd the answeres of thise men, sche bad hem go agayn pryvely, and sche retourned to hir lord Melibé, and tolde him how sche fond his adversaries ful repentant, knowleching ful lowely here synnes and trespasses, and how thay were redy to suffre alle peyne, requiring and praying him of mercy and pité.

Thanne saide Melibeus, "He is wel worthy to have pardoun and forgevenes of his synne, that excusith not his synne, but knowlecheth and repentith him, axinge indulgence. For Senek saith : Ther is the remissioun and forgevenes, wher as the confessioun is ; for confessioun is neighebor to innocence. And he saith in another place, He that hath schame of his synne, knowlechith it. And therfore I assente and conferme me to have pees, but it is good that we doo it nought withoute assent and the wille of oure frendes." Thanne was Prudence right glad and jolyf, and sayde : " Certes, sire," quod sche, "ye ben wel and goodly avysed : for right as by the counsail and assent and help of youre frendes, ye have be stired to venge yow and make werre, right so withoute here counseil schul ye nought acorde yow ne have pees with youre adversaries. For the lawe saith : Ther nys no thing so good by way

of kinde, as thing to be unbounde by him that it was bounde." And thanne dame Prudence, withoute delay or taryinge, sente anon messageres for here kyn and for here olde frendes, whiche that were trewe and wyse: and tolde hem by ordre, in the presence of Melibé, of this matier, as it is above expressed and declared; and praide hem that thay wolde give here avys and counseil what best were to doon in this matiere. And whan Melibeus frendes hadde take here avys and delibera-cion of the forsayde matier, and hadden examyned it by greet besynes and gret diligence, they gaf him ful coun-sail to have pees and reste, and that Melibeus schulde with good hert resceyve his adversaries to forgivenes and mercy.

And whan dame Prudence had herd thassent of hir lord Melibeus, and counsil of his frendes accorde with hire wille and hire entencioun, sche was wonderly glad in herte, and saydo: "Ther is an olde proverbe that saith, the goodnesse that thou maist do this day abyde not no delaye it nought unto to morwe; and therefore I counseile yow yesende youre messageres, whiche that ben discrete and wise, unto youre adversaries, tellynge hem on youre bihalve, that if thay wol trete of pees and of accord, that thay schape hem withoute dilay or tary-inge to come unto us." Which thing was parformed in dede; and whan these trespasours and repentyng folk of here folies, that is to sayn, the adversaries of Melibé, hadden herd what the messangores sayden unto hem, thay were right glad and jolif, and answerden ful mekely and benignely, yeldyng graces and thankinges

to here lord Melibé, and to al his compaignye: and schope hem withoute delay to go with the messangeres, and obeye hem to the comaundement of here lord Melibé. And right anon thay token here way to the court of Melibé, and token with hem some of here trewe frendes, to make faith for hem, and for to ben here borwes. And whan thay were comen to the presence of Melibeus, he seyde hem thise wordes: "It stondith thus," quod Melibeus, "and soth it is, that ye causeles, and withouten skile and resoun, have doon gret injuries and wronges to me, and to my wyf Prudence, and to my doughter also, for ye have entred into myn hous by violence, and have doon such outrage, that alle men knowe wel that ye have deserved the deth: and therfore wil I knowe and wite of yow, whether ye wol putte the puryschment and the chastisement and the vengeance of this outrage, in the wille of me and of my wif, dame Prudence, or ye wil not." Thanne the wisest of hem thre answerde for hem alle, and sayde: "Sire," quod he, "we knowe wel, that we be unworthy to come to the court of so gret a lord and so worthy as ye be, for we han so gretly mystake us, and have offendid and giltid in such a wise ageins youre heighe lordschipe, that trewely we have deserved the deth. But yit for the groete goodnes and debonaireté thal al the world witnesseth of youre persone, we submitten us to the excellence and benignité of youre gracious lordschipe, and ben redy to obeye to alle youre comaundementz, bisechyng yow, that of youre merciable pité ye wol considre oure grete repentaunce and lowe submissioun, and graunte us for-

givenes of oure outrage, trespas, and offence. For wel we knowen, that youre liberal grace and mercy strechen forthere into goodnesse, than doth oure outrage, gilt, and trespas, into wikkednes; al be it that cursedly and dampnably we have agilt ageinst youre highe lordschipe." Thanne Melibé took hem up fro the ground ful benignely, and resceyved here obligaciouns, and here bondes, by here othes upon here plegges and borwes, and assigned hem a certeyn day to retourne unto his court for to accepte and receyve the sentence and jugement that Melibé wolde comaundo to be doon on hem, by these causes afor sayde; which thing ordeyned, every man retourned home to his hous. And whan that dame Prudence saugh hire tyme, sche freyned and axed hire lord Melibé, what vengoaunce he thoughte to take upon his adversaries. To which Melibeus answerd and saide: "Certes," quod he, "I thenke and purpose me fully to dosherite hem of al that ever thay have, and for to putte hem in exil for evermore."

"Certes," quod dame Prudence, "this were a cruel sentence, and mochil ageinst resoun. For ye ben riche y-nough, and have noon neede of other mennes good; and ye mighte lightly gete yow a coveitous name, which is a vicious thing, and oughte to ben eschewed of every man: for after the sawe of thapostil, covetise is roote of alle harmes. And therefore it were bettre for yow to lese so moche good of youre oughne, than for to take of here good in this manere. For bettir it is to lese good with worschipe, than it is to wyne good with vilonye and schame. And every man oughte to do his dili-

gence and his busynesse, to gete him a good name. And yit schal he nought oonly busie him in kepinge of his good name,<sup>87</sup> but he schulde enforce him alway to do som thing, by which he may renovele his good name; for it is writen, that the olde goode loos of a man is soone goon and passed, whan it is not newed ne renoveled. And as touchinge that ye sayn, that ye wol exile youre adversaries, that thinketh me mochil ageinst resoun, and out of mesure, considered the power that thay han gyve to yow upon here body and on hem self. And it is writen, that he is worthy to lese his privelege, that mysuseth the might and the power that is geve to him. And yit I sette the caas, ye mighte enjoyne hem that peyne by right and lawe (which I trowe ye mow nought do), I say, ye mighte nought putte it to execucioun peraventure, and thanne were it likly to torne to the werre, as it was biforn. And therfore if ye wol that men do yow obeissaunce, ye moste deme more curteisly, that is to sayn, ye moste give more esyere sentence and juggement. For it is writen: He that most curteysly comaundeth, to him men most obeyen. And therfore I pray yow, that in this necessité and in this neede ye caste yow to overcome youre herte. For Senck saith, he that overcometh his herte, overcometh twyes. And Tullius saith: Ther is no thing so comendable in a gret lord, as whan he is debonaire and meeke, and apesith him lightly. And I pray yow, that ye wol forbere

---

<sup>87</sup> *And yit schal . . . . good name.* This passage, omitted in the Harl. MS., is restored from the Lansd. MS.

now to do vengeaunce, in such a manere, that youre goode name may be kept and conserved, and that men mowe have cause and matiere to prayse yow of pité and of mercy; and that ye have noon cause to repente yow of thing that ye doon. For Senec saith: He overcometh in an evel manere, that repenteth him of his victorie. Wherefore I pray yow let mercy be in youre herte, to theeffect and thentent, that God almighty have mercy and pité upon yow in his laste juggement. For seint Jame saith in his Epistil: juggement withoute mercy schal be doon to him, that hath no mercy of another wight."

Whan Melibé had herd the grete skiles and resouns of damo Prudens, and hir wys informacioun and techynge, his herte gan encline to the wille of his wyf, consideryng hir trewe entent, confermed him anon and consented fully to werke after hir reed and counseil, and thankid God, of whom procedeth al goodnes, that him sente a wif of so gret discreocioun. And whan the day cam that his adversaries schulden appere in his presence, he spak to hem ful goodly, and sayde in this wise: "Al be it so, that of youre pryde and heigh presumpcioun and folye, and of youre negligence and unconnyng, ye have mysbore yow, and trespassed unto me, yit forasmoche as I se and biholde youre humilité, that ye ben sory and repent-aunt of youre giltes, it constroigneth me to do yow grace and morey. Wherefore I receyve yow to my grace, and forgoe yow outorly alle the offenses, injuries, and wronges, that ye have don to me and agayns me and myne, to this effect and to this ende, that God of his

endeles mercy wole at the tyme of oure deyinge forgive us oure giltes, that we have trespassed to him in this wrecched world : for douteles, and we ben sory and repentaunt of the synnes and giltes, whiche we have trespassed inne in the sight of oure lord God, he is so free and so merciabile, that he wil forgive us oure gultes, and bringe us to the blisse that never hath ende." *Amen.*

END OF VOL. II.











